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THE YOGA
OF
SRI AUROBINDO

PART SEVEN

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
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THE YOGA
OF
SRI AUROBINDO

Section One

REALISATION, PAST AND FUTURE

THE whole material and physical world, the whole earth—I mention earth, because we are concerned directly and much more with it than other regions—has been till now governed by forces of consciousness that come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. Even the thing man has named God is a force, a power in the Overmind. The entire universe has been, so to say, under the domination of this status of consciousness. Even then, you have to pass through many intermediary grades or levels to arrive at the Overmind and when you reach there the first impression is that of a dazzling light that almost blinds you. But one can and has to press on and go beyond. Sri Aurobindo says, the rule of the Overmind is precisely coming to its end and the rule of the Supermind will replace it. All the past spiritual experiences were concerned with the Overmind: so it is a thing known to all who have found the Divine and are identified with Him. What Sri Aurobindo says is this that there is something more than the Overmind, something that lies a step higher and that it is now the turn of this higher status to come down and reign. We need not talk much of Overmind, because all the saints and seers, all religions and spiritual disciplines, scriptures and philosophies have spoken about it at length. All the gods known and familiar to men are there in its

Pantheon. What we want, what is needed at present is a new revelation, a manifestation in a new manner of which very few were conscious in the past. We are not here merely to repeat the past.

But it is so difficult. It is difficult for people to come out of experiences they have had, of what they have heard and read about always and everywhere. It is difficult for them not to think of the Supermind in terms of the Overmind, not to confuse the Supermind with the Overmind. They are unable to conceive of anything beyond or different. Sri Aurobindo used to say always that his Yoga began where all the past Yogas ended: in order to realise his Yoga one must have already arrived at the extreme limit of what the ancients realised. In other words, one must have had already the perception of the Divine, the union and identification with the Divine. This divinity, Sri Aurobindo says, is the Divine of the Overmind which is itself something quite unthinkable for the human consciousness, and even to reach there one has to rise through many planes of consciousness and, as I said, one gets dazzled and dazed even at this level.

There are beings of the vital who, whenever they appear to man, are taken by him for the supreme godhead. You may call it a disguise, but it is a very successful disguise, for people who see it most often get thoroughly convinced that what they see is indeed God himself. And yet such a god is only a vital being. Even so, the beings of the Overmind are stupendous in comparison

with us, human beings, who are truly bewildered whenever we come in contact with such entities. And Supermind and supramental beings are yet beyond. So you realise the distance to be covered.

But there is a kind of Grace that comes to your help. If the scientist had again to go over all the experiments that have been done, all what others have found in the past in his line in order to make a further progress, to come to a new discovery, then he will have to pass his whole life in repeating the past and will have no time for anything else. The scientist just opens instead a book or consults another person who is conversant with the past and gets all the knowledge he requires of it. Sri Aurobindo wanted to do something like that in the spiritual domain. He asks you to gather the experience of the past,—it is all there recorded in earth's history, and pass on; basing yourself upon that, you rise up to still higher ranges.

You may pertinently ask, however, why we have not started with overmental beings, we should have had here, say, Vivekanandas only and not ordinary frail human creatures.

You think the work would have been easier? Such beings, on the contrary, would have been less manageable and malleable. For what is most difficult is to convince someone who has had already a realisation. He believes he has reached the goal and no further progress is necessary for him. It generally happens especially to men who have made effort and realised the object of the

effort that they stop with that, because they feel they have reached their final goal. They get settled and fixed there. It was their personal goal and they have got it. Their brain gets crystallised and their consciousness fossilised. They will live there all their life and will never know how to move. So I say, those who have had an experience or a realisation in themselves are not necessarily the most advanced. Such a person lacks an element of simplicity, modesty, plasticity that spontaneously come to one who feels that he has not grown fully and has to develop further.

A "realised person", if I may say so graphically and somewhat strongly, is a finished product to be kept in a glass-case for show in a museum. He is a sample showing what has been done and what could be done. But you do not have there the stuff to do more. I would prefer for my work to have someone who may have little knowledge, but who has much good will, a great aspiration, who feels within him this flame, this need to go on. I say, he may know little, he may have realised even less, but here is good material with which one can go far, very far. Besides, there is another point to note. As in mountain-climbing a guide is very useful, even indispensable, who can show you the proper way and make it easy for you to climb higher and higher altitudes, so in spiritual ascension, a guide, if you have the good fortune to meet one, will help you to rise much higher than you could do yourself with your own personal strength and your own personal view of a fixed goal—

you are not proud of your discovery and you do not waste time or energy in useless searches and enquiries.

That is why I prefer children—children in body or in soul—and fear grown-ups steeped in erudition and realisation.

THE SPIRAL UNIVERSE

EVOLUTION does not proceed in a straight line, but in a spiral. That is to say, it is not a constant progress in one direction, but consists of progression, regression and an ultimate progression. The spiral movement means that all things must enter into the phenomenon of evolution, so that it is not one thing only that progresses and others remain behind but that all move forward—all move forward but at different speeds and also from different starting-points. And they move not straight as the crow flies, but in a circle like the soaring eagle. When you concentrate upon one point of the circle, you will see relatively to it many others not advancing at all but receding and the point itself will seem at times to be going back towards a position already left behind. One goes back to pick up certain elements that have not been included in the progress, not properly dealt with. It happens usually that when you progress in one thing, you forget another; so you have to turn back and take up the neglected element. Thus you have to go round and round, as it were, until you include the totality of your being, even embrace the totality of the universe. When you have, however, gathered the bypassed factor and come back to the original position from where you seemed to have

regressed, you find that you are not exactly at the same point but at a corresponding point on a higher plane. That forms a spiral, not merely a circle.

There are, in the universe, an infinite number of points moving, each forming a spiral; so there are an infinite number of spirals. And these spirals do not lie only side by side, but cross each other and thus give an aspect of contrariness and contradictoriness. So if you wish to take a total view of the movement of universal progress, you will be somewhat puzzled. There are so many lines that advance and there are so many which recede at the same time. Some come into the light, others go into the background and none independent or self-sufficient. There is a sort of intermingling, even coordination.

The universe can thus be conceived as a globe consisting of an infinite number of intersecting spirals. One can give to each spiral a different colour, each representing one aspect of nature's movement. A model globe of this kind may perhaps be constructed. A section only of the curve of a spiral is on the outside, the rest is within the globe and can be seen because of its special colour, provided we consider the globe as something transparent. It is these multiple sections outside that form the surface of the globe. The inside is of course full of spirals, excepting that section of a spiral which is outside. And yet though crossing and recrossing they do not form an opaque mass. One can see through and follow the brilliant lines of various colours. That is

how I see it. You can try to make a geometrical figure of it, if possible.

Nature has a plan of its own. It is not like the coherent rational plan of man. Nature's plan is made of an aspiration, a decision and a goal. But the way is quite fantastic, so it appears to man. Nature seems to move from moment to moment, under the stress of the occasion; there are advances, withdrawals, trials, contradictions, demolitions of things, laborious building up, and again throwing down. It is a complete chaos. She begins a thing, leaves it half done, takes up another, rejects one thing altogether, begins anew something left off, makes, remakes, unmakes, separates, mixes up. She follows a million lines of advance at the same time but not from the same point and each with its own speed and rhythm. There is such a tangle that seems to make no sense. Still there is a plan, she pursues an object which seems to be very clear to her, although veiled to the human eye. The spiral globe I spoke of was meant to give some idea of this complex unity in Nature's plan.

You can bring in a better order, with less waste and more efficiency a more conscious organisation. But for that man must change his own inner organisation first. In his own consciousness and being he must bring out a new order, a new cosmos.

THIS EXPANDING UNIVERSE

THE universe is a manifestation, that is to say, the unfolding of infinite possibilities. The unfolding has not stopped, it is continuing and will continue, throwing out or bringing into physical expression all that lies behind and latent. The universe may be considered as a sphere or globe, a totality or assemblage containing everything that exists here and is being manifested. Beyond and outside, as it were, this circle of creation lies the transcendent, the Supreme Divine, in his own status. The transcendent means the unmanifest. It does not mean, however, the void; for it contains all that is to be manifested, each and everything in its potentiality, its essence, in a seed form. All is there as a secret possibility, a fundamental truth of being—all is there not simply as a general idea, but in every detail, though as it were on a microscopic scale, something like the chromosomes in life plasm. The transcendent is beyond time and space. Manifestation or creation begins with the formulation of time and space, the frame in which what lay latent is gradually brought out and displayed. The transcendent is consciousness absorbed in itself, identified with itself; manifestation is consciousness waking and looking at itself as its object (*La prise de conscience objective de soi*).

Now, one can be seated or fixed exclusively in the

status of the unmanifest; to such a one the infinite and eternal is an everpresent reality, there is nothing like past or future, everything is. One knows and is in the presence of a fixed actuality; whatever happened, whatever will happen—as it seems to us—all are there realised on the same plane and at the same moment (although the terms plane and moment do not quite apply there). It is the world or status of the absolutely determined. Free choice or indeterminacy, the unexpected and the unforeseen have no place here.

On the contrary, the sphere of manifestation is precisely the field of the sudden and the incalculable, that is to say, of free will. Things appear here that were not before, forces come into play that were not expected or even imagined. They all move along lines that shift and change continually. This is the status of becoming —*sambhūti*, as designated by the Upanishad and described by the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, in the words, *panta reei*, everything flows on. Here, often a certain disposition that seems quite stable or predictable is upset all of a sudden by the irruption of a new and novel factor from somewhere else.

But in between the two, on the borderland, as it were, there is a poise of consciousness which combines both in an integral perception, it is a single movement of both being and becoming. It is the Supermind. It is the point where what is or exists in the unmanifest just *becomes* in the manifest, the pure truth or reality above at standstill stirs and begins to come out or disengage

itself through a play of possibles. It is like a cinema film that is rolled up and kept in a spool till it is put on the projector and rolled out gradually upon the screen of life and in life-size presentation.

The transcendent then is an integral reality, for it contains all and the whole, but it is of fixed dimension —*avyaya*, it neither increases, nor decreases: it is the Stable, the Stagnant—*sthanuracaloyam*. The cosmos, on the other hand, is not only moving and changing, but also ever increasing or expanding. For new possibles are becoming reals here and adding to the sum of its factors. Out of the transcendent, the unmanifest, are constantly shooting down potentials and becoming dynamic in the universe making it richer and ever richer.

Furthermore, this expansion is not merely accretion but a growth, that is to say, it is directed and has a sense and purpose and end in view. In fact all the possibles that find play, the elements that enter here below are necessary in as much as they contribute to the meaning of the Play, to the working out of the dénouement. We can take again the analogy of the cinema film and say that the unrolling film is interesting because it has a continuous and developing story to tell, with a beginning, a middle and an end. Likewise, the manifestation too tells a connected story—it is not a drivel, but has a goal; it is a process elaborated by a *final cause*. Even like an individual being it is an organism, ever growing and bringing out its latent possibilities, moving towards a high fruition of its aspiration and destiny.

In this sense manifestation is a more complete—and more and more complete—reality than the non-manifest Supreme. The non-manifest, the transcendent is an integral reality, the manifestation a completer reality, since it adds to it its own reality, the actuality of concrete expression.

THE WORLD-SERPENT

THE universe is often conceived as a serpent coiling round and eating itself, the head turning about and swallowing the tail. The image is that of a sphere or globe enclosing the whole existence and that of something without end or beginning, infinite. It also gives the idea of a perpetual lengthening out, that is, constant creation, but at the same time of a turn back: the unrolling of the universe is not in a straight line, but circular.

The universe is however a complex entity. It is not made of only one plane, but consists of many planes superimposed upon each other. Thus at the bottom as the basis is the physical—matter—and at the top as the acme is the most subtle, the spiritual: in between there are gradations whose number varies according to the mode of the outlook.

Reverting to the image of the serpent, one can say that its head represents the spirit, the supreme consciousness, and the tail the other end, matter or supreme unconsciousness. The image, furthermore, gives a graphic picture of the great truth that extremes meet, the head bends round and catches the tail. Psychologically this means that if one rises higher and higher in consciousness, starting from the body consciousness, traversing Life and Mind and Overmind and reaches the very source, the head and front of consciousness, then, curious to

say, one finds oneself all on a sudden landed in the heart of matter. In the occult language this is expressed by saying that the consciousness that shines on the highest peak, is imbedded also here below in the cavern of dead matter. If one rises sufficiently high, rung by rung, to the extreme end of the ladder, one comes round exactly at the point from where one started without having to pass through all the rungs. Conversely too if one probes sufficiently deep into the farthest corner of matter, the last limit of inconscience, one comes out into the blaze of the same infinity that covers above and below and around.

One can recall here the curious conclusion reached by some modern scientists in regard to the spherical character of the universe that the universe being an endless bounded plane it is quite likely that a particular star you see in front of you may not at all be situated direct against you, but that it might be sending out rays that have come round the whole sphere and taken you, as it were, from behind!

THIS MYSTERY OF EXISTENCE

HAVE you ever asked yourself why there is this universe at all, at least this earth with which we are so much concerned and which seems to us so real, so authentic? It would perhaps be very wise on your part if you did not! I have often spoken to you of Theon. He was truly a sage in his own way. People used to come to him and ask questions. Many asked why there was an universe. He would answer, "But what is that to you?" Some would ask, "Why is the universe like this?" To that he would say, "It is what it is, how does it matter?" Others again would remark, "I do not consider the world a satisfactory affair." There, we begin to come more to the point. To those who find the world unsatisfactory I would say, "Get to work, try to change it. Find a way that it may be otherwise, that it may be made better. Things are what they are, it is no use speculating over that and getting worried. Seek for the means of remedy, so that things may be made what they should be. Why are things what they are? Not that one cannot know the reason, although one may not always be sure of it. The best thing to do is to take whatever is as it is and try to change it towards that which it should be. Now the wonder of it is that if you are sincere, if you want to know sincerely and work sincerely, you will come to know why things are what they are—the cause, the origin

and the process, for they are all one. There is one truth at the base of things; if that were not there, nothing would be. If you seize that truth, you seize at the same time the origin of the creation and the means of changing it as well. In other words, if you are in contact with the Divine—for the Divine is that base—you are in possession of the key to all things, you know the why, the how and the process for change. One thing to do then is to start doing the thing. But you might say, it is too much, too difficult, too big for you—to work in the world or for the world. Well then, start with yourself. You are a little mass of substance, a symbol or representative of the universe. Let your work then be to form and fashion that particle. Concentrate upon it, go within—even within that little person of yourself you will find the long looked-for key."

RECORD OF WORLD-HISTORY

ALL that has happened upon earth, everything from the beginning of creation till now, everything without exception has been recorded somewhere in some particular world or region of consciousness. All that man has thought, his researches and discoveries, his findings and conclusions are kept intact, carefully stored. If you want to know anything of the past history of the earth, the happening at a particular time and place, you have simply to transplant yourself into that world and look into the records.

It is a very curious place, something like a vast library. It consists of an infinite number of cells, as it were, each containing all information on a particular subject. They seem to be squares in shape and they remain closed normally. If you have to consult a particular square, you press a button and it opens and out of it comes a roll of written matter. You unroll it and find out what you want. There are millions and millions and millions of these cells and rolls, around, above, everywhere. Fortunately in the mental world you can move anywhere as you like, you do not require lifts and ladders to get up.

The point, however, is how to go there at all. Well, the first thing is that you must completely silence your mind. Mental cogitations, agitations you must leave behind, no thoughts must enter your consciousness, it

must be tranquil and still, like a transparent sheet of water or smooth and polished like a mirror. The description I have given of a library is only an image, the real thing is something different. However, you have in this way some idea to go upon. In the silent mind you form a point of consciousness and send it out as an emissary to gather the required information. This point of consciousness must be absolutely detached and free to go as it likes; for if it were in any way kept tied to the normal movements of your own mind, then you will not go further than what is in your head. You must be able to make your brain a blank, you must have no preconceived notion, no idea that the solution of your problem might lie in this way or that. As I say, your mind has to be a thoroughly blank page, a clean slate, with nothing written on it, no mark even. There should be instead a sincere aspiration to know the truth, without postulating beforehand what kind of truth it might be; otherwise you will meet your own formation in the brain.

You can certainly test and correct the information you get from your inner voyage by outside information, what others have found or what is recorded in books. The inner knowledge need not and should not replace the outer knowledge, but supplement it, both should support and complete each other. But there is a mixture about which you must be very careful. Your silent mind, your inner consciousness receives the necessary knowledge, but as you want to express it or translate in normal terms, that is to say, as your brain gets active again, it may and

often does supply its own materials and formations and the original knowledge gets disturbed and distorted. Sometimes what you may do is to dictate most passively the things you see or perceive and let another take down in writing as you proceed. You must say exactly as you see and the other write down exactly as he hears.

It is the image of reading a book that I have given you. But it is, as I said, only an image. What it is really is a kind of perception. And the perception may be in the form of an image, it may be in the form of a narrative. At other times it may be a simple answer to a particular question. There are many kinds and varieties of record, differing according to the types or levels of consciousness that you go to.

Naturally the process is not easy and available to everybody, as an ordinary book. It requires a special aptitude and a special discipline.

FREEDOM AND DESTINY

FROM a certain point of view whatever happens here in the material world is a reproduction or realisation of whatever has already happened or existed on another level of reality. In this world then there would be no free choice, everything being predetermined. From another standpoint, however, one can say with equal truth that the world here is being recreated every moment; it is not a mere replay or flash-back of a past event, a pre-existent phenomenon, but something ever new and fresh. Take, for an example, a material body, of a particular chemical composition, having some well-defined properties; it behaves according to that nature and produces inevitably results deducible from it. Now, if a new element is introduced into the thing at any moment, the whole quality of the composition and its behaviour will change. Something like that happens in the universe.

The universe is a huge mass of innumerable elements forming a certain composition and in accordance with this composition all are organised within itself. But such an arrangement is not the end or the culmination; it is not static, but moving forward; it is in the process of development. For at any moment, through the action of a different kind, one or more new elements can be introduced into the total mass that forms the universe at a given time and that will necessarily change the whole inner composition. The universe, the material universe,

I mean, is a concretisation of a certain aspect or emanation of the Supreme. This concretisation is progressive, not necessarily in a constant and regular way, but in answer to a law, with a subtle kind or degree of liberty. Thus, in the composition of the universe at a moment new elements penetrate and alter the organisation. The organisation that was perfect in itself and moved and unrolled itself according to a definite plan and pattern, suddenly finds itself changed and the inner relations too are modified and attain a different poise. That may give the impression of something incoherent or imprecise or miraculous, according to the manner in which one looks at the problem. So there are these two simultaneous facts or factors: there is a determinism which is absolute in its way with a complementary movement of liberty, the unforeseen addition into a fixed existing sum.

This addition comes from the aspiration of the supreme consciousness. There is nothing to wonder at the phenomenon. There is an aspiration acting in the world, moving with a certain end in view; the purpose is to bring back the fallen and obscured consciousness to its original and normal state of the divine consciousness. Each time that this aspiring consciousness meets an obstacle in its working, a new resistance to conquer or to transform, it calls for a new Force. And this new Force is a kind of new creation. In the human being too there are different domains in obedience to a law of correspondence; in each there is for him a different destiny and each is absolute in its line. But there is also

in him, through his aspiration, a capacity to enter into relation with a domain higher than where he happens to be and bring down an action of this higher domain into the lower determinism. So we can say that there is a horizontal determinism in each domain, absolute in its normal working; but there is also a vertical intervention from other higher domains or even from the highest and then the lower determinism is changed completely. Thus every human being is at once a sum of various determinisms, absolute in their way, and there is also an absolute liberty that can intervene by bringing down other forces into the apparently rigid frame of destiny of the lower worlds and alter it. That is how things in the world give the impression of the unforeseen, the incalculable, the miraculous.

You may call this intervention Grace; for without the Divine Grace this could not happen. There is a consciousness and a vision of things where all are brought back to this single source; Grace only exists, nothing else is there. That does every thing. But as you have not risen to that summit, had not that extreme realisation, you have to take into account your own person, your personal aspiration, the thing that calls for the Grace and to which the Grace responds. The two are needed here. Both are ultimately ways of viewing the same truth. The mind, however, finds it difficult to conceive both in a simultaneous movement. The rigid distinctions it makes takes away much from the supple and subtle and integral truth of a total experience.

Section Two

THE DIVINE TRUTH—ITS NAME AND FORM

THE divine truth at the heart of things, people have called by all kinds of names, every one presenting it from his own angle of experience. But always it is the one Reality. There are millions of ways leading towards it; but one thing is certain, you can find it, whatever the way you follow, whatever the form you give it: the result is the same, the final experience is identical. If all have touched the thing, they touch the same thing always. And the proof that they have touched the thing is that it is the same for all; if it is not the same thing, then they have not touched it. You can give it any name you like: a name is only a word.

What is the value of a word, after all? Have you not noticed that there are people who do not understand you, however clearly you speak to them. There are others again who understand you if you utter only two words. The external form—the sound of a word—has a meaning, if there is a force of thought behind; the greater the force of thought, the more powerful and precise and clear it is, the greater the chance of people receiving the force and understanding the word that carries the force. But if someone speaks without thinking, usually it is impossible to understand him; he would seem to you to make only a noise. You must have noticed also that people who have lived together and are habituated to each other's

thought and talk, do not require any definition of the words they use or even a large use to understand each other. There has been a mental adjustment and the words are only an excuse for the inner contact, the contact between brain and brain which underlies or even precedes the words. But when you meet a new person, it takes you time to adapt and adjust yourself to understand the words he uses.

It is the meaning, the thought behind the word that is important. When the thought is powerfully thought, it produces a vibration of which the word is only a carrier, an intermediary. Indeed, you can develop the thought-power to such an extent that you are able to establish a direct material contact with the minimum or even no words at all. Naturally this requires a strong power of concentration. But you will find that the bodily mechanism is only a mechanical means; it is an instrument, but not always important or indispensable.

When we are conscious of the Divine, do we see Him in all things in some particular form?

You expect to see a divine form in each and all things? It may happen so. But I am not sure; I have the impression that there is a large part of imagination in such experiences. You may, for example, see the form of Krishna or Christ or Buddha in every being or thing. But I say that much of human conception enters into this perception. Otherwise what I was telling you just now would

not be true. I said all who have the consciousness of the Divine, all who get the contact with the Divine, wherever one may be, to whatever age or country he may belong, all have the same essential experience. If it were not so, the Hindus would always see one of their gods, the Europeans one of theirs, the Japanese a third variety and so on. This may be an addition of each one's own mental formation, but it would not be the Reality in its essence or purity which is beyond all form. One can have a perception of the Divine Presence, a very concrete perception, one can have even a personal contact with the Divine, but it need not happen in and through the kind of form you imagine; it is something inexpressible, beyond all explanation or definition, it is evident only to one who has the experience. It may be as you are suddenly lifted up into a peculiar condition, you find yourself in the presence of the Divine which takes a form familiar to you, a form you have been accustomed to associate with the Divine, because of your education, your upbringing and tradition. But, as I say, it is not the supreme essence of the experience: the form gives after all a limitation to the experience, takes away from it its universality and a large measure of its power.

THE SYMBOLIC IGNORANCE

How can there be dark spots in the light of the full consciousness (the Mother's consciousness)? The darkness is only relative and depends upon the degree or status of consciousness. At the outset, on lower and narrower ranges, the light is dim and confined: it is surrounded by a much greater and denser area of darkness. As the consciousness grows, that is to say, manifests itself, as it rises and widens, the obscurity too recedes more and more and slowly fades away. This consciousness is not personal, but something impersonal. In other words, it holds within itself the universe including especially the earth. And earth is a dark object; it is made of ignorance and unconsciousness. The light envelops it and only gradually penetrates and transforms it. The Mother's consciousness is thus the representative consciousness; it represents all that is yet unconscious and striving secretly without knowing towards consciousness; it is also at the same time the light itself that acts and transforms. The divine consciousness embodied acting upon itself thus symbolises and embodies its action upon what would be viewed as others.

DISEASES AND ACCIDENTS

If the body is ill, does the mind too fall ill?

NOT necessarily, to be sure. Illnesses are, as I have told you, generally a dislocation among the different parts of the being, a kind of disharmony. It may well be that the body has not followed the movement of progress, it might have lagged behind while the other parts have, on the contrary, made progress. In that case there is an unbalance, a breaking of harmony and that produces an illness, I mean, in the body, for the mind and the vital also might remain all right. There are many people who have been ill for years, suffering from terrible and incurable diseases, and still maintained their mental power marvellously clear and active and continuing to make progress in that domain. There was a French poet, a very good poet, Sully Prudhomme, by name; he was mortally ill and it was during that time that he wrote his most beautiful poems. He was always in a very good humour, charming, smiling, pleasant to everyone even while his body was going to bits. You may remember how the great Louis XIV used to joke and laugh, while, in his last days, his body was being lacerated and given over to leeches by his doctors and surgeons. It depends upon individual and individual. For there are people of the other type who get thoroughly

disturbed from head to foot if there is the slightest bodily indisposition. Each one has his own combination of the elements.

There is of course a relation between the mind and the body, quite a close relation. In most cases it is the mind that makes the body ill, at least it is the most important factor in the illness. I have said, there are people who keep their mind clear although their body suffers. But it is very rare and very difficult to keep the body healthy when the mind suffers or is unbalanced. It is not impossible, but very very exceptional. For I explained to you that it is the mind which is the master of the body, the body is an obedient and obliging servant. Unfortunately one does not usually know how to make use of one's mind, not only so, one makes bad use of it and as bad as possible. The mind possesses a considerable power of formation and of direct action on the body. It is precisely this power which is used by people to make their body ill. As soon as there is something which does not go well, the mind begins to worry about it, makes formations of coming catastrophes, indulges in all kinds of imaginary dangers ahead. Now, instead of thus letting the mind run amuck and do havoc, if the same energy were used for a better purpose, if good formations are made, namely, giving self-confidence to the body, telling it that there is nothing to be anxious about, it is only a passing unease and so on, in that case, the body would be put in a right condition of receptivity and the illness pass away quietly even as it came. That

is how the mind is to be taught to give good suggestions to the body and not to throw mud into it. Marvellous results follow if you do it properly.

When an accident happens there is in it a critical moment. For example, you slip and you fall. Now between the moment when you slip and the moment when you fall, there is just a fraction of a second when you are, as it were, given the choice. It can either be nothing or something very serious. Only to make the choice you must have a perfectly awakened consciousness and your being must be constantly in contact with the psychic. There is no time to bring in the contact, one must already be in contact. So, just between the slip and the fall, if the mental and psychic formation is sufficient, you come out unscathed. If, on the contrary, the body thinks, as it is its habit, "Oh, I have slipped" and becomes apprehensive—it is, as I say, a matter of a fraction of a second, even less—then the catastrophe happens. You have the capacity to prevent an accident happening, you are given the choice at a momentary moment. But for that you must learn to be wide awake, to be fully conscious. When you are in that condition you can prevent an accident, you can stop an illness coming into you. But it is just the matter of a split second and you must not miss it.

And yet there is still another moment. When you have fallen and are already hurt; you have still now the open chance whether it will turn well or ill, whether it will stop at being just a mishap or become something

really serious or as serious as possible. I do not know if you have noticed that there are certain people who do not seem to miss any occasion for an accident. Every time there is a possibility, they have it. And the accident is never slight, it tends to be serious and often very serious. People say, what an unlucky fellow! Chance is never on his side! etc. etc. But all that is sheer ignorance. Everything depends absolutely upon the working of the consciousness. I could cite any number of examples and such striking examples. There are people who might have been killed but came out of the accident safe and sound. There are others for whom what was quite harmless in the beginning turns worse and worse and proves in the end, perhaps, fatal.

But you must understand it is not the working of thought, ordinary thought. The thought may be as good in one as in the other. It all depends upon the moment of choice. There are people who know how to react in the right manner and at the right moment. It is the character that matters. Such people have a wakeful, alert consciousness; they are not asleep, they are on the watch constantly within themselves. And at the right moment they call for the aid, they invoke the divine force, yes, exactly at the right moment. And the danger is warded off. On the other hand, whenever there is something going wrong, some dislocation in the being, if you are seized by fear, dark foreboding or defeatism in the consciousness, then you are done for.

It is not the mind, as I say, which decides. It is an inner attitude, a poise of the being, the right consciousness which reacts in the right manner. Its effect goes very far. You do not know what a power it is. Even if it is there just for a fraction of a second, it works miracles. Only it must be there already, you must be already in the state of wakefulness, you cannot order it at the moment, you have no time.

You may say again that it is the Divine Grace that saves. But would you explain to me how it works? It would be interesting indeed to find out who had precisely the awakened consciousness, had the faith and the inner trust, had called for the help and had in him that which answered automatically—and even in a way unconsciously—to something that came in. Human intelligence is a relative thing and has varying degrees of power. Usually it understands by contrasts and contraries. It does not understand a truth in its absoluteness. For example, I have received hundreds of letters thanking me because they were saved from dangers. But I do not remember to have received a letter thanking me because things were normal and nothing had happened. Men perceive the action of Grace only when there is the atmosphere of the pessimist and there is a danger and they have escaped from it, that is to say, when there is already the beginning of the accident, when the accident has come to pass. When they come out of the danger safely only then they take note of the force that saved. Otherwise they would not have even thought of it.

If the voyage they undertook came off without any accident they would not think of any action of Grace present there. They would take it as a matter of course. But precisely because it is so, there may be acting here a Grace of a higher order and there may be existing already a deeper preexistent harmony between the consciousness of the person and the higher force to which it responds. The chance of an accident is already the beginning of the dislocation I spoke of. But the situation becomes complicated if it is a case of collective accident. The result here depends upon the atmosphere of the persons involved. It is the proportion of these two elements in the personnel of a collective accident that determines the character and magnitude of the accident.

I will tell you a story, I mean a true story, in this connection. There was a pilot who was considered what is called an *ace* among his fellowmen in the first Great War. He was an extraordinary aviator and the hero of many victories. Nothing had happened to him at any time. But towards the end of his life, an event occurred—some private tragedy—and all at once he had the feeling that something was going to happen to him; an accident perhaps, and it was all finished with him. He had come out of the war but was still in the army. He wanted to make a flight to South Africa, from France right up to the south of Africa. He started from France and made for Madagascar, so far as I remember, and then wanted to fly back to France. Now, my brother was at that time the Governor of Congo and needed to join his post as soon as possible.

He asked for a place in the aeroplane of the pilot I am speaking about. It was not a regular service plane, but one of those used for experimentation to show what the machines were capable of and the skill of the airmen. Many tried to dissuade my brother from making the journey, saying that these adventurous trips were always dangerous. My brother however did not mind the risk. Nothing serious happened, but for a slight breakdown in the middle of the Sahara which was easily got over, and the plane made safe journey and deposited him at his place in Congo. The plane continued further down, to Madagascar, as I said. Now the pilot started back, he did half the journey, his plane crashed and he was killed forthwith. I shall explain to you what really the matter was. What happened had to happen, it was a foregone conclusion. My brother had an absolute faith in his destiny, a certainty that nothing would touch him. The consciousness of the other was on the contrary full of doubt and apprehension. So the mixture of the two atmospheres brought about this that in the first instance the accident could not be prevented, but it stopped short of catastrophe. But once the destiny of my brother was not there with the machine,—like Caesar's destiny that made the boatman go safely across the river through a storm—the protection was also withdrawn and the pilot had to go down under the full blast of his bad fate. I can narrate another analogous story, it is with regard to a ship. There were two persons, husband and wife. They went by air to Indo-China. They had an accident, a very serious accident. All were killed

except only these two. Now they had to return to France. They did not want to travel by air, they had the experience of it. So they took a boat, I mean a ship, which they thought would be quite safe. Now what happened was absolutely unexpected, quite extraordinary. In the middle of the Red Sea, in broad daylight, the ship struck against a reef and sank—a thing that does not happen even once perhaps in a million cases. All the passengers were drowned except, miraculous again to say, the pair. There are people like that, they carry misfortune with them, but the misfortune is for others, they themselves escape somehow.

If you look at the thing in an ordinary way, you do not notice it. But the fact is there. You must be very careful about your associations. An unfortunate association may prove disastrous to you. The *karma* of others may fall upon you, unless you have the inner knowledge, the vision and the necessary power. If you see a person with something like a dark whirl around avoid him at all cost. The moral of it all is that it is very useful to look into things a little more deeply than to observe the surface only.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

GOD has created the world, the material world as it is? Yes and No, more "No" than "Yes". For he has not created it directly. There have been many creators, rather *formateurs*, form-makers, in between the world and God, who joined in the work of creation. Who are they? They have been given various names. Creation generally follows a principle of gradation. It is done step by step, world rising out of world successively. Each world is a particular state of being, a particular mode of consciousness. Each state is inhabited by entities, individualities, personalities and each one has created a world around him or assisted in the creation of certain types or species upon earth. The last of these creators or Fashioners are those of the vital. At the top are those of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. It was these that created, that is to say, gave the first forms to earthly beings and things. They sent out their emanations and these again theirs in their turn and so on. Thus it was not the Divine Will which acted directly upon Matter and gave the world the form it could or should have had. There are layers and planes, graded intermediaries through which the Will has had to act. I spoke of the overmental and the vital plane. There is also the mental plane between them. There are mental beings who are also creators, giving form to some beings that have taken body upon earth.

Thus, there is a tradition which says that the world of insects is the outcome of the creators of the vital world. That is why when you see the insects under a microscope they take on appearances that are absolutely diabolical. Enlarged on a screen they look like veritable monsters, so terrifying they are. Microscopic monsters they are. So it is said, beings of the vital world thought of amusing themselves and created these impossible beasts making human existence uncomfortable.

You can of course ask how these intermediaries themselves came into being, not out of the Divine? Intermediaries come out of other still higher and higher intermediaries till the chain reaches the Supreme. Originally, that is to say, if you trace back to the original source, there is there, of course, only the Divine. Then how has the deformation come in? I explained to you once that if you do not remain one with the Divine, under his direct influence, do not follow the movement of creation or expansion exactly as the Divine wills, this rupture of contact is sufficient to bring about the greatest evil of all, division. Even the most luminous, the most powerful beings may decide to follow their own movement instead of obeying the divine movement. They may be in themselves marvellous beings, and human beings, if they saw them, would take them for the Divine himself, yet they can, since they follow their own will and work not in harmony with the universe, be the source of the greatest disorders. There is nothing that is not the Divine, only there comes about a disorder,

that is to say, each thing is not in its proper place. The problem is, this has to be remedied.

As to the question why this deviation, this evil at all, I can say, first of all, what you call evil may be only what is not convenient to you, but from the standpoint of universal arrangement that may be the most convenient. Secondly, the thing might have been just an accident, so to say, in the beginning. And what we are concerned with is not so much its why or even how but with the remedy to be found for the evil that is there. Viewing philosophically, however, we may note that the universe in which we live is evidently one movement out of many (actual and possible), that it follows its own law which is not the same elsewhere, that if the principle on which this universe has been created is that of free will, then you cannot prevent the disorderly movement from happening until a knowledge comes and illumines the choice. If one is free to choose, one may choose the wrong thing, not necessarily the right thing, for if it were decided from beforehand that the choice must be always good and in the right direction, then the choice will no longer be free.

But in reality these questions cannot be adequately answered in that way. It is a problem to which mental answers—of which the mental formulations even—only serve to diminish the dimensions of the problem; the question itself reduces the problem to a more or less elementary formula corresponding only vaguely and superficially and incompletely to the reality of things.

To be able to understand you must become. If you want to understand the why and the how of the universe you must identify yourself with the universe. And that is not easy.

In truth the question itself is wrong. It is childish. It presupposes things that are themselves questionable. There are certain ideas about creation which have been almost universally current, more or less permanently accepted by human thought during ages; they are of an astounding simplicity. There is a world here, it is said, and up there somewhere there is a being called God. This person one day thought of creating some kind of thing, a visible form. The world was the result. Evidently we see a lot of mistakes in his work. We conclude the creator perhaps is a well-meaning benevolent person, but not all-powerful; some other thing or being there is that contradicts him. Or perhaps he is all-powerful but then has no heart and must be cruelty itself—viewing the condition of his creation which is a story of sorrow and trouble and misery. Such an idea, I say, is simplicity itself, the simplicity of a child brain. When one speaks of God the creator as a potter making a pot, one thinks of him as a human being, only in bigger proportions. Truly, it is not God who has made man in his image, it is man who has made God in his image.

As I say, the question is wrongly put. The very form of the question already assumed a certain notion about God and creation. Your postulates or axioms themselves are vitiated.

The universe and its creator are not separate things, they are one and identical in their origin. The universe is God himself projected into Space (and Time). So the universe is the Divine in one aspect or another. You cannot divide the two, making one the creator and the other his work, the watchmaker and his watch. You put your idea of the Divine upon him and ask, why he has created such a nasty world. If the Divine were to answer, "It is not I, it is yourself. Become myself again, you will no longer feel and see as you do now. You are not yourself, therefore your question and your problem"! Indeed when you unite your consciousness with the divine consciousness there is no longer any problem. Everything appears then natural and simple, and correct and as it should be. It is when you cut yourself from your origin and stand outside, in front of him and against him that all the trouble begins. Of course you may ask, how is it that the Divine has tolerated a part of himself going out and separating itself and creating all this disorder? I would reply on behalf of the Divine, "If you want to know, you had better unite yourself with the Divine, for that is the only way of knowing why he has done so. It is not by questioning him by your mind that you will get the answer. The mind cannot know. And I repeat, when you come to this identification, all problems are solved. The feeling, one can explain, that things are not all right, that they should be otherwise comes precisely from the fact that there is a divine will unfolding itself in a continuous progression, that things

that were and are have to give place to things that shall be and shall be better and better than they have been. The world that was good yesterday will no longer be so tomorrow. The universe might have appeared quite harmonious in some other age but now appears quite discordant: it is because we see the possibility of a better universe. If we found it as it should be, we would not do what we have to do, we would not try to make it better. Even so, we would conceive the Divine in a very human way; for we remain imprisoned within ourselves, confined to this consciousness of ours which is like a grain of sand in the infinite immensity. You want to understand the immensity? That is not possible. It is possible only under one condition; be one with the immensity. The drop of water cannot very well ask how is the ocean: it has to lose itself into the ocean.

THIS UGLINESS IN THE WORLD

EVERYTHING in the world has at its source a supreme truth, how is it then that the world has become ugly in its expression? Why are things at all ugly? Because there are other things that intervene between the Source and the manifestation. For example, if I asked you: "do you know your true being"? what would you say? You do not know; it would be wonderful if you did. It is the same with all beings and things. And yet you are already a sufficiently developed being, a thinking being, and have gone through many stages of refinement; you are not quite the lizard walking on the wall! Still you cannot tell what is the truth of your being. That is the secret of the deformation in the world. It is because there is all the unconsciousness—the Inconscient—that has been created by the fact of separation from one's origin. It is this inconscience which prevents the Source from manifesting in its own nature, although it is there always. It is there, therefore all things exist, the world exists; but in its expression it is deformed, because it has to manifest itself through inconscience, through ignorance and obscurity. But how did it come about? The will to create was originally a will that projected itself towards individual formation; what it arrived at, however, was not the true individual (or individualisa-

tion) but a breaking up of the solid unity into infinitesimal fragments. The original indivisible unity became a sum of infinitely divided unities. These unities or units were individualisations of things separate and feeling and acting as such. It is precisely the feeling of separation from others that gives you the impression that you are an individual. Otherwise you would feel that you were only a fluid mass. That is to say, you are no longer conscious simply of your rigid outer form and all that cuts you off from others and makes of you a separate individual, you are conscious of the vital forces that move about everywhere, of the inconscient that is the foundation of all, you have the impression that you are a moving mass with all kinds of contradictory movements in it which cannot be separated from each other. You would not have the impression that you are an individual being, but that you are something like one note or vibration in a whole complex. The original will was to form individual beings capable of becoming conscious again of their divine origin. This process of individualisation created the necessity that to be an individual one must feel oneself separate: that is why one is cut off from the original consciousness, at least apparently, and is fallen into inconscience. For the Life of life is the Origin alone and if it is separated from that source, consciousness naturally turns into unconsciousness and you lose trace of the truth of your being. That is the process of the creation or formation of the world by which the pure origin does not manifest directly in its essence and

purity, but through deformation, that is to say, unconsciousness and ignorance. That is how ugliness came in, death and disease, wickedness and misery and all. It is the movement, I say, brought in by the necessity of individual formation that has produced these things, each and every one of them, that is the one source of the multiple evil in all its modes and vibrations. I do not say this was indispensable—that problem I may take up later on. But for the moment I direct you to the source in order to show the remedy. And there is no point in questioning why it is so. As I said, the only way to settle the world problem is to be conscious again, to recover the lost consciousness. Of course, if you say like some religions that good is good and evil evil and they will always remain so, then there is no longer any problem. An eternal struggle binds the two together and whichever wins for the moment will make the world a little better at one moment and a little worse at another. But the two exist, continue to exist eternally and indissolubly intertwined. But you have seen it is not like that; one can come out of the tangle into the perfect unity of the truth, for it is that which is the only and original source.

It is this perfect truth, let me repeat, that has scattered itself abroad, into these innumerable little atoms, into these insignificant brain cells which, in spite of all their ignorance, are still moved by a secret stir of consciousness: these little specks of darkness reach out towards light which they can find, for it is within them. They will

arrive at what they seek. It may take time more or less, but they will reach in the end. That is then the remedy: it lies in the very heart of evil itself.

DIVINE JUSTICE

Why do people receive force from the Divine even when He knows that they are not sincere?

You must understand once for all that the Divine, when he acts is not moved by human notions. Possibly he does things even without what we call reason. In any case the reasons are not of the human kind; above all, the Divine has not that sense of justice which man has. For example, when you see a man full of greed for money, trying to cheat people just for the sake of getting a few rupees, your idea of justice cries out that such a man should be deprived of all money, he must be reduced to poverty. But actually you find things happening to the contrary. Although that is only the appearance of the situation; behind there is an altogether different picture. The greedy gets the object of his greed, but he has to make an exchange, give up some other possibilities. He gets money but he loses in his consciousness. And then it also happens very often that when he does get what he desired so much, he finds himself not so happy, generally he is even less happy than before: he is tormented by the wealth he has gained. You must not judge things by apparent success or by apparent failure. One can say, on the whole, that the Divine gives what one asks for and that is the best

way in which one gets his lesson. If your desire is ignorant, unconscious, obscure, selfish, you increase in yourself ignorance, unconsciousness, obscurity and selfishness, that is to say, you move away more and more from truth and consciousness and happiness, away from the Divine, in other words. For the Divine, however, there is only one thing which is true, the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Union. Each time you put material things in front of you, you become more and more material, you push behind more and more the Divine. To the eye of the ignorant you may have all the appearance of wonderful success, but this success, from the standpoint of truth, is a terrible defeat, you have bartered truth for falsehood.

To judge by appearances, by apparent success is an act of complete ignorance. Even in the case of a person hardened to the core, who has apparently the utmost success, there is a counterpart: exactly this hardening, this veil that is put up thicker and thicker between the outer consciousness and the inner truth becomes also more and more unbearable. The outer success has to be paid for very dearly. One must be very great, very pure, one must have a very high, very unselfish spiritual consciousness to be able to succeed and yet not be affected. There is nothing so difficult to bear than success. That is the true test in life. When you are not successful, you turn very naturally to yourself, go within you, seek there comfort for the outer failure. And they who have the Flame within them and the Divine helping them truly,

that is to say, if they are mature enough to get the help, if they are ready to follow the path, must expect blows coming upon them one after another, because that helps. Indeed that is the most powerful, most direct and most effective help. But if you have success take care! Ask yourself, at what price you have had it. What is the thing you have paid for the success? Of course there are people of a different kind. They who have gone beyond, who are conscious of their soul, who are entirely surrendered, they can succeed and success does not touch them. But one has to rise very high to be able to shoulder the burden of success. It is perhaps the last and final test that the Divine puts to anyone. He says: "Now that you are noble and high and unselfish, you belong to Me alone. I shall make you triumph. We shall see if you can bear the blow"

To the Asuras too the Divine gives what they ask for. Generally it is in that way that their end comes all the sooner. An Asura is a conscious being. He knows that he has an end. He knows that the attitude he has taken in this universe will necessarily destroy him after a time. Of course the Asura's time is much longer than human time. Even then he knows that there will come an end for him, for he has cut himself from Eternity. What he seeks is to carry out his desires to the utmost extent possible till the day of his doom, the final defeat comes. And very possibly if he is allowed his way the defeat will be hastened. That is why exactly when great things are about to happen, at that moment the adverse forces

become the most active, most violently active and apparently the most successful. They are given a free field as it were to rush to their doom.

THE DIVINE SUFFERING

GENERALLY speaking, when one is unhappy, it is one more suffering added to the collective suffering of the Divine. The Divine acts upon Matter in a state of deep compassion: this compassion is translated in Matter and is figured there by what we call Psychic Sorrow. It is, as it were, a reversed image of the original reality.

The Divine's compassion, translated in the individual physical consciousness, becomes a sorrow that is not egoistic, a sorrow that is an expression of one's identification with the universal sorrow through sympathy. I have described the experience at some length in one of the *Prayers and Meditations*. I spoke there of "the sweetest tears that I shed in life"; for those tears were not for my sake, I was not weeping for myself. In almost every case man grieves for egoistic reasons, in the human way. Whenever anyone loses a person he loves, he suffers and weeps, not over the condition of the person: in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred or even more, people do not know in what condition the person gone may be, they do not and cannot know if the person is happy or unhappy, if he is suffering or is in peace. It is the sense of separation that causes the grief, the feeling that he will not be with them any more which they so much wish. At the root of all human sorrow, there lies this return upon one's own self, more or less conscious, more or less

admitted. But when you feel unhappy for the unhappiness of others, there comes in a mixture. That is to say, to your personal grief is added a psychic element which I described as the reversed image of the Divine Compassion. Now, if you can distinguish between the two, the personal anguish and the disinterested sorrow, come out of what is egoistic and concentrate upon the divine element, make yourself one with it, then you can in that way come in contact with the great universal compassion, which is something immense, vast, calm, mighty, profound, which is perfect peace and infinite Bliss. If you know then how to enter into your suffering, go down to the very bottom of it, pass beyond the portion that is egoistic and personal, go farther on, then you arrive at the door of a wonderful revelation. Not that you should seek suffering for the sake of the suffering and in order to have the experience; but when it is there, when it has come upon you, then try what I have suggested, cross the border, the barrier of egoism in your suffering: note first where is the egoistic part, what is it that makes you suffer, what is the egoistic reason of your suffering, then step across and beyond, towards something universal, towards a greater principle. You enter then into the vast, the infinite compassion, the door of the Psychic opens for you. If, in that domain, you see me in tears, as you say you did in your dream, then you can identify yourself with me at the moment, enter into those tears as it were, melt into them. That will open the door and it will bring you an experience, a very unique experience

that leaves always a deep mark upon the consciousness. It is never blotted out altogether even if the door closes again and you become once more what you are in your ordinary movements. That experience, that mark remains behind and you can recall it, go back to it, refer to it in your moments of concentration. You feel then the immensity of an infinite sweetness, a great peace, pervading all your being, it is not in your thought only; it goes out and sympathises with everything and can cure everything.

Only you must sincerely wish, you must have the will, to be cured. Everything lies there. Now I always come back to the same theme. You must be sincere. If you want an experience for the sake of the experience and, once you have it, to go back to your ordinary ways, that will not do. You must sincerely will to be cured—cured precisely of the ordinary ways—you must have the aspiration, the true aspiration to overcome the obstacle, to mount up and up, above and beyond yourself, so that you may drop all that pulls you back, drags you down, to break all limits, clarify and purify yourself, rid yourself of all that lies in your way. If you have this will, the true intense will not to fall back into past errors, to rise out of obscurity and ignorance towards the light, shorn of all that is human, too human—too small, too ignorant —then that will and that aspiration shall act, act gradually, strongly and effectively bringing you a complete and definitive result. But beware, there must be nothing that clings to the old movements, that does not declare itself

but hides its head and when the occasion is opportune puts up its snout.

So I say you must be truly sincere, very truly. If you discover anything clutching, sticking somewhere in the depths, you must be ready to pluck it out, wholly erase it and see no mark of it is left behind. Yes, sometimes you repeat your mistakes. You repeat till your suffering becomes too acute to bear and compels you to be sincere in spite of yourself as it were. But you need not try that line. It is a method, but a bad method: bad, because it destroys so many things, wastes so much energy, leaves such wrong vibrations. In the intensity of your suffering you do discover the will towards perfect sincerity. But you can be sincere also in less arduous and tortuous a way.

There is a moment in the life of every one, there is a moment when this need of perfect sincerity comes as a matter of ultimate choice. There is a moment in the life of the individual and there is a moment in the life of the group also to which the individual belongs, when that choice has to be made, the final purification has to be performed. It is a question then almost of life and death, the progress has to be made if one is to survive.

DIVINE DISGUST

It is a "disgust" filled with all compassion. It is something which takes upon itself the wrong vibrations in others to cure them. Instead of throwing a wrong movement back upon the wrong doer in a spirit of cold justice, it draws it within itself, absorbs it in order to eliminate it or transform it, reducing as much as possible its material consequences. You know the ancient legend of Shiva who has a dark patch upon his throat, because he swallowed all the poison of the world: it is a figure of divine disgust.

Naturally, the poison will not have the same effect upon the Divine as upon man. For there is an essential difference between a state of ignorance and a state of knowledge. Something untoward happens to you in your normal state of ignorance, it has a certain character and brings mentally certain results: but the same thing happening to you in a state of knowledge will not carry the same effect. For example, take a very material thing, a blow, a right royal physical blow; well, if you are in a state of inconscience and ignorance, as you usually are, you will have to suffer the full consequence that depends wholly upon the force of the blow, who or what gave the blow and the helplessness of the object. But the same blow delivered in the same way by the same agent but upon a being who is conscious and full of knowledge, will produce instantly a reaction reducing the natural consequences to a minimum,

even annulling the consequences altogether; for the reaction here is a reaction of knowledge, of light and not that of ignorance, of obscurity. On the moral level the action can be clearly noticed. For example, you can receive an emotional shock, not in egoistic blindness, that is to say, identifying yourself with it or drowned in it; you can hold it away from you, look at it in an objective manner, see what it is, note the nature of its vibration etc. etc., and then you put the light of your knowledge, the ultraviolet ray, as it were, of truth upon it. As a result, there comes a new disposition, the shock loses its effectivity. Even so, the physical result of a physical blow can likewise be obviated. If that were not possible what would be the utility of the Divine taking upon himself the evil thing. Evil would continue in the same way and the world continue suffering in the same way. Precisely because the obscure vibrations are transformed into vibrations of light in the divine consciousness that the Divine takes upon and within himself all the ills of the world.

In the case of the physical occurrence, the knowledge I speak of is the inner knowledge of the body cells, their existence, composition, distribution and the knowledge of the consequences of the blow, its natural and expected effects. Also at the same time there should be the knowledge of what the cells should be like, how they ought to react to the blow. And the procedure adopted too is quite different from that of physical Nature which takes hours, days, months to repair a damage; the inner knowledge can do the thing immediately. This inner knowledge can be

brought down from its highest source. Instead of the mere psychological knowledge, one can call down the supramental knowledge and focus it upon the part of the body endangered. If the elements of the body, the cells come under the influence of the force of truth and receive it, then there can be an immediate new ordering of the elements according to the higher law. That will bring about not only the cure from the blow received, the mending of the accident, but initiate a big progress in the general consciousness. This power to command the consciousness has no limit. If you have committed an error, even a grave error, and if you can yet call upon the consciousness of truth, this power of the supramental and allow it to work, it will give you an occasion to make a formidable progress. In other words, never be discouraged if you have blundered, blundered even more than once. Only you must keep your will firm, and take sometime the unshakable resolution not to repeat. Rest assured you will in the end triumph over your difficulty.

Section Three

THINGS SIGNIFICANT AND INSIGNIFICANT

ALL things are insignificant in ordinary life. The thoughts you think, the actions you do, the feelings you experience, all your movements have no significance at all, they possess no value. They belong to the superficial part of your being, they come and pass away, like ripples on the sea, leaving no trace or effect in the depths. Only at a rare moment, if ever you come in contact with a corner of your soul, if something of that inmost consciousness touches or gazes at any limb of yours, that flash of a moment is the only significant thing that happens in the midst of all the useless mass that is your life. This is the only precious point and the rest a world of rubbish. To make your life significant, to give it its true meaning and value, you must then draw back from the surface trivialities and look for something else behind. You must go very deep indeed if things are to cease being insignificant.

WHY DO WE FORGET THINGS?

THERE are many reasons, of course. First and the most important is that we use the faculty of "memory" in order to remember. Memory is a mental instrument depending upon the formation and growth of the brain. Your brain is developing constantly unless, of course, it is already degenerating; the development can continue for a long time, longer than that of the body. In the process there are necessarily things replaced by others; and as the instrument grows, elements that were useful at one stage are no longer so at a subsequent state and have to give place to others more suitable. The net result of our acquisitions remains there in essence, but all that led to it, the intermediary steps are suppressed. Indeed, a good memory means nothing more than that—that is to say, to remember the results only, so that the fundamentals are sifted and stored, namely, those alone that are useful for further construction. This is more important than just trying to retain some particular items in a rigid manner.

There is another thing. Apart from the fact that memory by itself in its very nature is a defective organ, there is the other fact that there are different states of consciousness one following another. Each state faithfully records the phenomena of that moment, whatever they

may be. Now, if your mind is calm and clear, wide and strong, you can by concentrating your consciousness on that moment bring out of it and recall in your present active state what is recorded there of your movements then; you can, that is to say, go back to the particular state of consciousness at a given moment and live it again. What is registered in your consciousness is never obliterated and hence not really forgotten. You can live a thousand years and you will not have forgotten that. Therefore, if you do not want to forget a thing, you must retain it through your consciousness, and not through your mental memory. As I have said, the mental memory fades away, new things, things of today replace old things, things of yesterday. But that of which you are *conscious* in your consciousness, you can never forget. It lies somewhere in the background, returns to you at your bidding. You have only to withdraw to that state of the consciousness where it lies embedded. In this way you can recall things that you knew perhaps centuries ago. It is how you remember your past lives. For, a movement of consciousness never dies out, it is only the impressions on the surface brain-mind that are fugitive. What you have learnt with this superficial instrument laboriously—only read, heard, noted, underlined—leaves no lasting mark, but what is imbibed, breathed in into the stuff of consciousness remains. The brain is being constantly renewed and reformed. Old cells, cells that have become weak and atrophied are replaced by younger and stronger ones or the old cells combine differently or enter into other organisations.

Thus the old impressions or memories they carried are obliterated.

It is, as I say, by entering into a previous state of consciousness where you experienced a thing that you can always call back the thing. Only you must know how to get at the point, submerged somewhere in the depths. The body, after death, dissolves, the greater part of the vital and the mind dissolves also—only a small portion that has been well organised, given a compact cohesive form endures. Such an achievement is a rare phenomenon. But it is otherwise with the consciousness. Consciousness is eternal. If you contact the consciousness you discover the whole mystery of the earth and creation. It is consciousness that can create.

HOW TO GET RID OF TROUBLESOME THOUGHTS?

THERE are several ways and also it depends upon the case. The first and the easiest way is to think of something else. Concentrate your attention upon a subject which has nothing to do with what troubles you. You can read something interesting or take up a work that demands care and consideration. Something creative would be more effective; writers and artists, for example, when they are engaged in their particular occupation forget everything else, their whole mind is engrossed in that one matter. But, of course, once the work is done, the trouble begins again, if one has not learnt to control the thoughts in the meanwhile. So there is the second method which is a little more difficult. You have to learn a movement of rejection. As you reject or throw away a physical object, even so you must throw away and reject the thought. It is more difficult, but if you succeed, it is more effective. You have to practise and continue the endeavour, repeat and persevere and there is no reason why you should not succeed, if you are thoroughly sincere and serious.

There is a third method. It is to bring down from above a greater light which is in its nature the very opposite of the thoughts you are dealing with, opposite in a very radical and deep sense; that is to say, if the thoughts that trouble you are obscure and ignorant, especially if they

happen to rise from the subconscient or the inconscient, supported by the mere instincts, then, by calling down the light from above and turning it upon the dark thoughts you can simply dissolve them or transform them, wherever possible. It is the supreme means, but perhaps not within the easy reach of all. But if you succeed in it, not only the thoughts do not come, their very cause is removed. The first method is to turn aside, the second to face and fight, the third to rise above and transform. In the third you are not only cured, but you make a progress —a true progress.

BAD THOUGHT-FORMATION

A BAD thought is a bad act. You may not know it, but an evil thought is truly an evil act. If you think ill of a man and wish him ill, you are responsible for the mishaps that may befall him to the same degree as when you act ill towards him. Unfortunately, an evil thought is not a recognised crime and nobody intervenes when you think ill. Not only so, there are a good many people who consider it a play to excite wicked thoughts in others. They do so (innocently, they think,) sometimes through sheer stupidity, more often through vanity, through an air of self-importance for having said something interesting.

When you have a bad thought, you make an evil formation and you carry it about you or throw it out. It happens sometimes that when you pass by a man, you suddenly feel unwell, you may not connect the two and you may know nothing of the matter, but in fact the man may have been entertaining an evil thought and it has pounced upon you.

When you find out the cause, then what you have to do is to chase it away, as if it were a fly. The flies are sometimes very troublesome, the more you drive them away the more they come and take it as an amusing game. But if you are serious and have the will, you succeed in driving them out. In the same manner when an evil formation

seeks to possess or touch you, push it away immediately, push it away again and again till it disappears.

Why should there be a bad will at all, you ask?

You go into the very origin of things. Why is there inconscience, ignorance and obscurity? You ask for the why and wherefore of the universe. Why is creation like this and not otherwise? Every one has explained in his own way. The philosophers have done so, the scientists have done so on different lines. But, none has found the way out. You ask why there is bad will, but the truly interesting and important thing is to find a means whereby there would be no bad will. What is the use of asking why there is pain and suffering and misery, unless it is to find out the remedy? If you look for the why, you may find as many explanations as you like, each may be useful in a way, but none leads you anywhere, except into a blind alley.

There are many things in the world you do not approve of. Some people who, as they put it, wish to have the knowledge, want to find out why it is so. It is a line of knowledge. But I say it is much more important to find out how to make things otherwise than they are at present. That is exactly the problem Buddha set before himself. He sat under a tree and continued till he found the solution. The solution, however, is not very satisfactory: "You say, the world is bad, let us then do away with the world"; but to whose profit, as Sri Aurobindo

asks very pertinently? The world will no longer be bad, since it will exist no more. The world will have to be rolled back into its origin, the original pure existence or non-existence. Then man will be, in Sri Aurobindo's words, the all-powerful master of something that does not exist, an emperor without an empire, a king without a kingdom. It is a solution. But there are others, which are better. We consider ours to be the best. There are some who say, like the Buddha, evil comes from ignorance, remove the ignorance and evil will disappear. Others say that evil comes from division, from separation; if the universe were not separated from its origin, there would be no evil. Others again declare that it is an evil will that is the cause of all, of separation and ignorance. Then the question is, from where does this bad will come? If it were at the origin of things, it must have been in the origin itself. And then some question the bad will itself,—there is no such thing, essentially, fundamentally, it is pure illusion.

Do animals have a bad will?

I do not think so. Things spoken of in relation to animals as monstrous are not really due to a bad will. Let us take for example the insect world. Of all animals it is this species which seems to have most the attribute of wickedness, something akin to a bad will. It may, however, be simply that we are applying our own mode of consciousness to theirs, we impute bad will to an

action which is not really of the kind. For example, there are insects whose larva can live only upon a living being; they have to feed upon a living creature, they do not get nourishment from dead flesh. So the parent insect before laying the eggs that are to become larvae first prepares the ground: it finds another insect or a small animal, stings into a nerve centre and paralyses it; then safely lays eggs in that paralysed body, which not being dead feeds the larvae when they come out of the eggs. All this looks very much machiavellian. But nothing is reasoned out here, it is pure instinct. Would you call it bad will? it is simply the will to propagate. You can say perhaps that these insects are moved by a spirit of the species which is conscious and has a conscious will and that this will is an evil will. These beings that create or form the various species of the insect world—many working in a much more monstrous way than the example I have given—must then truly be frightful, inspired by a perverse and diabolic imagination. Quite possible. For it is said that the origin of the insect world is in the vital; the builders of that world belong to the vital and not to the material plane of consciousness; in other words, they not only symbolise, but they represent and live the evil will. They are fully conscious of their evil will and they exercise that will deliberately and with a set purpose. Man's bad will is often only a reflection, an imitation of the bad will of vital beings which is a will clearly hostile to the created world, whose express intention it is to make things as painful, as difficult, as ugly,

as monstrous as possible. It is these beings, some say, that have created the insects. Even then, the insects cannot be described as representing the evil will, since they do not do mischief purposely, they are moved by an unconscious will in them. The bad will is really that will which does evil for the sake of doing evil, which seeks to destroy for the sake of destroying, that takes pleasure in doing wrong. In the animal I do not think there is this kind of evil will, especially in the higher species. What is there is the instinct of self-preservation, obscure and violent reactions, but not the kind of evil that human will shows in the perverse human mental. I believe it is the human mind under the direct influence of vital beings that begins to work in the perverse way. Titans, Asuras are the beings of ill-will, they belong totally to the vital world and when they manifest themselves in this world of ours, they mean mischief, they do evil for the sake of doing evil, they destroy for the sake of destroying, they have the delight of negation.

People speak of the wickedness of cats, when the cats, for example, play with the mice before eating them. I have observed the matter and I know what it is. It is not at all as you think. The cats do what they do, not through wickedness or wanton cruelty. The mother cat hunts for the sake of her young ones. She catches a mouse; if she gave it immediately as it is to the babies, they would not be able to eat, it would be hard and tough flesh. So she plays with it, to us she seems to do so; she plays,

that is to say, throws it up, rolls it, catches it again, gives it a few blows, tosses it once more, all that simply to soften the flesh, to prepare it beforehand, so that the little ones can put their teeth into it and eat easily. It is not certainly playing with the intention of only playing, for the pleasure of it. There is as much ill-will behind it as there is behind man's killing in the slaughter-house. The animal hunts and prepares its food, its prey, in the best way it can. It has no oven, no fireplace, no cooking; it must have some way of its own to make its food soft and edible.

It is said also that the first expression of love in living beings is the desire to eat him whom one loves. To love means to embrace, to absorb, to devour. This seems to prove the fact that when the tiger catches its victim or the snake his, the victim in either case, although alarmed in the beginning, do not at all suffer, but lets himself go in a sort of delight of being devoured. I shall narrate to you a true story, the experience of a person from whom I heard it. A man was passing through a bush in the company of friends. The friends were a little ahead, he was behind. Suddenly he was caught by a tiger, a man-eater. The companions turned back to know what had become of their absent friend. They followed the marks and ran up just in time to prevent the tiger from swallowing their friend. When he had recovered a little he was told what a frightful experience he must have gone through. "Not at all", he declared to the astonishment of everybody, "just imagine, I did not know what

had happened, but as I was being dragged along by the tiger, I felt a great love for him and I had a great desire that he should eat me!" Well, it is a true fact and I do not exaggerate. Once upon a time I saw with my own eyes something very similar. In the zoological gardens of Paris, a huge python was kept in a cage. It was the hour of feeding the animals and I happened to be present. The cage was opened and a young white rabbit was put in. It was a pretty little animal. As soon as it saw the serpent, it ran to the other corner of the cage and sat doubled up all trembling. The serpent had not moved at all, had simply turned round its head. It seemed as if it was half asleep, quietly it put out its neck and head and began to look at the rabbit. It was horrible, the picture. The serpent only looked at the rabbit without moving. Now I saw another picture. The rabbit that was a mass of fright, ceased trembling; it had shrunk itself, it became normal. Then it lifted its head, opened wide its eyes and gazed at the serpent; it began to move slowly, very slowly, forward and when it had come sufficiently near, the neck of the serpent shot out and the rabbit was in its mouth. Then came the task of preparing the food. The serpent rolled, twisted, broke the limbs of its prey, munched it into something like a soft mass that might more easily go down the gullet. Where is the ill will, the wickedness in all this? When a man does anything like it, he does not do it spontaneously, through his natural instinct, but driven by his mind and mental perversions, a thing different from the healthy instinct

that he has no more. But man wanted to act freely and independently!

What is instinct exactly? It is Nature's consciousness. Nature is conscious of her action; it is not an individual consciousness. It is a global or collective consciousness. There is also a consciousness of the species. Each species has its consciousness which is called sometimes the spirit of the species, that is to say, a conscious being presiding over a particular species. Nature is conscious in the sense that she knows what she wants, she knows her whither and her how, her end and the way to go towards it. To man much of Nature seems incoherent, because his consciousness is narrow and he has not an over-all vision. When you look at the small details, the little fragments, you do not understand; you do not find any link, sequence, sense. But Nature has a conscious will, she is a conscious being. Perhaps the word "being" is too human. When we speak of Nature's being, we naturally think of the human being, only a little bigger, or perhaps much bigger but working more or less in the same way. But it is not so. Instead of the word "being", I would prefer the word "entity". The conscious entity that is Nature has a conscious will and it does things much more deliberately and purposively than man, and it has formidable forces at its disposal. Man speaks of blind and violent Nature. But it is man who is blind and violent, not Nature. You say an earthquake is a terrible affair. Thousands of houses crash into dust, millions of people are killed, whole cities

devastated, entire portions of earth are swallowed up etc. etc. Yes, from the human point of view Nature seems monstrous. But what has she done after all? When you get a knock on your body somewhere, there appears a blue patch. Are you worried about it? Your earthquake is nothing more than a reshuffling of a cell in your body. You destroy thousands of cells every moment of your life. You are monstrous? That is the relative proportion. And consider, we are speaking of earth alone and earthly events. But what is this earth itself in the bosom of the universe? A point, a zero. You are walking on the ground and are not looking down. You place one step forward and then another and you trample thousands of innocent ants under your feet. If you were an ant you would have cried out, what a cruel and stupid force! Imagine other forces stalking about much bigger than yourself and under their casual steps millions of creatures like you are crushed, continents are pressed down and mountains kicked up. They do not even notice such catastrophic happenings! The only difference between man and ant is that man knows what happens to him and the ant does not. But even there are you sure?

WHY ARE DREAMS FORGOTTEN?

IT is because dreams do not occur always in the same domain. It is not always the same part of the being that dreams nor is it the same place where one dreams. If one were in conscious communication with all the parts of one's being then one would remember all his dreams. But it is only with a few parts of your being that you remain in conscious contact in sleep. For example, you have a dream in the subtle physical, that is to say, in the domain very near the physical. This generally happens towards the end of the night, in the early hours of the morning just before you get up (say between four and five). Before rising from bed, if you remain very quiet, without making any movement and concentrate a little, you will be able to remember the dreams that you had immediately before: the communication between the physical and the subtle physical being close, you would be able to remember easily enough. Now if you begin from the beginning what happens is something like this. As you fall into sleep, the body becomes quiet and the vital too goes to rest; but the mind continues to be active, it has not gone to sleep. You have now what are called mental dreams built out of all kinds of ideas and imaginations set free. After a time the mind gets tired and falls silent; the vital has rested sufficiently and wakes up in its turn and moves about. Your dreams of the mental domain

are pushed back giving place to vital dreams. When you are active in the vital you very often go out of your body, visit all kinds of places and get involved in various exploits and adventures. If you wake up suddenly then, you would remember your vital exploits in sleep. Some people train themselves to get up at fixed hour of the night. They thus bring to memory the dreams they had just before waking. Now the vital too after having been sufficiently active gets tired and goes to rest. Yet another part of the being now replaces the vital and comes forward. It may be the turn of the subtle physical to enter the arena. The vital is pushed back and you lose contact with it.

To become conscious of all the various movements of your nights, to recover them in your memory, some sort of training is necessary. The different states of the being in which you roam at night are, as you have seen, usually separate from each other. There is a gap in between two states; you jump from one to the other. There is no highway passing through all the domains of your consciousness connecting them without break or interruption. That means forgetfulness. When you leap from one into the other, you push back, that is forget, the one you leave behind. So you have to construct a bridge and very few people know how to do it; it requires more engineering skill than to build a material bridge. You may have very wonderful experiences in sleep, but you forget them all; perhaps you remember, as I have said, the last one, the one nearest to the physical mind. The

best way then to remember and become conscious of the whole night is to begin at the end and go backward. Catch hold of the last image that still persists in your memory, like the loose end of a thread and then pull, pull slowly, till image after image comes back: it is something like the unrolling of a cinema film in the reverse direction. When you lose trace, stop and concentrate a little; try to call back whatever stray bit or faint impression still persists or can be more easily revived and then again pull slowly, gently, pick up whatever shows itself, try to join the bits. In this way, after some trial and training you will be able to recover a good part of the lost underworld.

There are, however, many ways of going about the thing. For you must know that your nights are not all the same. Each one is different and brings its own kind of sleep and dream. As each day is different having its own particular kind of activity, each night too likewise comes with its peculiar experiences. You may think that one day is more or less exactly like the previous day, that you are doing the same thing from day to day; but it is not so. Outwardly the activities may appear to be the same, but really their nature and significance vary from one day to another. No two moments are alike in the universe. Your night too is an universe of its own kind. Each night brings its own problem and needs its own solution.

TO THE CHILDREN OF THE ASHRAM

IN the beginning, naturally, there were no children in the Ashram. They were not accepted, they were refused admittance. It is only after the last great war that they began to come in, that is to say, when their families sought for a safe shelter. Since then they are being accepted and I do not regret it. I believe that for the future there is much more stuff among children who know nothing than among grown up men who think they know everything. Have you any idea of the art of sculpture? how they make images out of clay? you take a quantity of clay and then moisten it with water. The earth must be very fine powder and with water you make a good paste of it. Then you begin to work upon it, to give it a form gradually. But so long as you work, the clay must be kept soft, moist; then only you can change it, refashion it as you like. And when it is done the figure is baked and it becomes hard and fixed. If you have to make a change now, you can only break it and begin anew; for it is now solid and unchangeable. In life too something like that happens. As you grow you lose your softness, suppleness, malleability, you become more and more crystallised, fossilised, immobilised. Unless you break the form into a thousand bits, there is no chance of its being remoulded, reshaped according to a new pattern. A child is an unformed paste and one

can do something with it. The great advantage of the child is that it has not grown, it wishes to grow, the one idea that possesses children is how to become grown up men. They do not know, however, that once they are grown up, that is to say, developed and formed, they lose three-fourths of their value which lies precisely in this element in them which is unformed and yearns for a form, which seeks always to go forward, to progress and need not be broken in order to be corrected or reshaped.

A grown-up man is somewhat like a traveller who has taken a whole life-time to come up on the peak, he has been going round and round the hill-side, not knowing the straight road or the easy ascent. Once on the top such men are already old and exhausted and have now neither the energy nor the time to scale a further height. There are some, however, who know the way or who have been shown the way, they follow the short cut and are soon on the top. They are still full of youthful energy, look out on the horizon and see what other ranges are to be negotiated. The others have not only no inclination to see beyond, but they are full of the feeling that they have done considerable work—in wandering about, that is to say—and now yearn for a well-earned rest. You, my children, are, on the other hand, being carried up from the very bottom by a funicular railway, as it were, straight to the summit. There you will stand before the whole world, before yourselves and see and make your choice for a further adventure. All this on

one condition, you remain young, childlike, glad, happy, happy to be a child, plastic matter in the hand of the Divine.

Why were children not accepted before?

It is because where there are children, you have to do nothing else but to be busy with them. The children are an all-absorbing subject. Everything must be organised for and about them, everything must turn round them; all must be planned in view of their welfare. So the outlook changes totally. Things were different before. First of all, there was a kind of austerity and bareness which suited the grown-ups, but which could not be imposed upon children. To the grown-up you can say, "Take it or leave it". If you are not pleased with the conditions, if you find it hard to bear, you are not obliged to be here, you may see your own way. You cannot say the same thing to a child. You have no right to ask of a child what is not suitable to his normal growth and development. Children must reach a certain state of maturity before they can make a choice. You cannot compel them to choose before they have the capacity to choose. So first of all you have to give them all things they are normally in need of. Well, that brings about a revolution in the organisation. I have lived a solitary life, I know the life of solitary men living in a group. That is quite a different thing. Children demand other conditions, other arrangements.

We no longer tell the young newcomers, you are going to do yoga. We tell them, you will find here conditions in which you can grow freely and grow better. Here you will learn under what conditions the world and society can be made better. Then it will be time for you to choose your line of destiny.

Section Four

ON OCCULTISM

IT has been often said and it is very true that as soon as you enter the domain of the invisible, the very first things you meet are literally frightful. If you have no fear, then alone you are safe; but the least fear means the utmost peril. It is for this reason that in ancient days the aspirant had to pass through a severe discipline for a long time precisely with the object of getting rid of fear and therefore of all possibility of danger before he was permitted to start on the way.

That is why till now I have not spoken to you of it. But if any of you feel you have a disposition for such things, or some special aptitude in this direction and are ready to surmount all weaknesses,well, I am at your disposal, ready to help you and initiate you into the mysteries. But I am afraid you have still to grow a little more, become more mature before I can take up the charge.

Of course, age is really no bar. I was doing occultism when I was 12 years old. But I must tell you I had no fear, I had fear of nothing. Here you come out of the body, you are connected with the body by the very tiniest, almost imperceptible, bit of thread, as it were. If the thread snaps, there is an end of it all, the end of your life. So you come out into another world and begin to look about and see what kind of world it is. Generally, the first things you see, as I said, are absolutely terrifying.

In your normal view, the air about you is empty; there is nothing—you see the blue of the sky or the white cloud or the sunshine and everything is beautiful. But when you have the other sight, the picture is quite different. You see that the whole atmosphere is filled with a multitude of small formations, which are the remains of desires and mental deformations and they crowd about you in such a way that the whole thing gives you a very disagreeable impression. Indeed, it is positively ugly more often than not. They come near you, attack you, press upon you and you fear and tremble. Then they assume formidable proportions. But if you are not shaken, if you can look with the eye of a calm curiosity, you will find then there is nothing so very terrifying. Things are not beautiful perhaps, but they are not frightful either.

I shall tell you a story to illustrate my point. I knew a Dane who was a painter, a painter of some talent. He was interested in occultism. Some of you might have heard of him. He had come here and met Sri Aurobindo. He did a portrait too of Sri Aurobindo. It was during the first Great War. He returned to France and saw me. He asked me to teach him this science. I taught him how to come out of the body, how to maintain control etc. etc. I told him especially, what I tell you now, not to have fear. Now he came to me one day and narrated his experience of a night. He had a dream; but of course it was not a dream: he knew how to come out of the body and was out consciously. Once out he was trying to find

where he was. Suddenly he saw moving towards him a tiger, huge and formidable, evidently with dire intentions. He remembered, however, my advice. So he kept calm and quiet and said to himself: "There is no danger, I am protected, nothing can happen to me, I am surrounded by the power of protection." And he looked straight at the animal calmly and fearlessly. As he continued looking, strange to say, he saw the tiger diminishing in size, shrinking and shrinking, till at last it became a small harmless cat!

What did the tiger represent? I told the painter that perhaps in the course of the day or at some time he was angry with some one and indulged in violent thoughts, wishing him harm etc. Now, as in the physical world, so too in the occult world there is a law of action and reaction or return movement. You cherish a bad thought; it returns upon you as an attack from outside. So the tiger might have represented some bad thought or impulse in him which came back upon him, like, as it is said, a boomerang. It is exactly one of the reasons why one should have control over one's thoughts and feelings and sensations. For if you think ill of a person, wish unpleasant things for him, then in your dream you are likely to see the person coming to attack you, more violently perhaps than you thought of doing. In your ignorance and impulse of self-justification you say, "Just see, was I not right in my feeling towards this man, he wanted to kill me!" In point of fact, however, the contrary is the truth. It is a common law in occultism that if you make

a formation—a mental formation, for example, to the effect that an accident or some unpleasant thing should happen to a person and you send out the formation to do its work, then, if it so happens that the person concerned is on a higher level of consciousness, that is to say, if he wishes harm to none, is quite disinterested and indifferent in the matter, then the formation approaches him but does not enter into his atmosphere or touch him, it rebounds upon the sender. In that case a serious accident may happen to the sender of the formation: if one wishes death to another, death may come to himself. That is often the result of *black magic* which is a deformation of occultism.

Formations are of many kinds. A formation is made for a particular work. When the work is done, the formation too dissolves. But it is a huge and complex subject. You cannot learn the whole of chemistry in one hour.

I shall tell you another story in this connection, for it has an occult bearing.

There was a very well-known scientist in Paris. He has written the story in a book of his. He wanted to know to what extent man's reason can affect or influence his reflex movements, how far one can control one's instinctive or subconscious impulsions by the force of conscious intelligence. So one day he went to the Zoo. Among the animals there were huge snakes, one was particularly notorious for its vicious character, that is to say, it could be easily excited and put into anger. It was a very big animal, black but beautiful. The serpents

were of course kept within glass cases, the glass being sufficiently thick to prevent any possibility of accident. He came before meal-time, when it was hungry; for after food they go to sleep. He stood before the glass-pane, quite near and began teasing and exciting the animal. I do not remember exactly what he did to rouse the animal, but there it was wild with anger; it shot out like a spring and darted at the face of the gentleman who was just on the other side of the glass almost touching it. He knew very well that nothing could happen to him, the barrier was sound and secure and yet each time the snake darted at him, he leaped back to avoid the blow as it were. The thing repeated continually and however much he repeated to himself all the reasons of his safety and security, the reflex gesture could not be controlled.

Only the scientist did not know one thing—an element of occult knowledge escaped him. The physical movement of the serpent was accompanied by a considerable amount of a vital projection of its nervous energy. It was that which struck him with an irresistible force. It was almost like a violent physical shock and mere reason has no power to control it. To check and control, you must learn the occult way.

MYSTICISM AND OCCULTISM

MYSTICISM is more or less an emotional relation with what one feels to be a Divine Power—it is a relation very intimate, emotive and intense with something invisible which one takes for the Divine.

Occultism is the knowledge of invisible forces and the power to handle them. It is a science, altogether a science. I always compare occultism with chemistry or physics; for occult knowledge is very much like scientific knowledge, only science deals with material objects and forces, while occultism deals with invisible entities and energies, their potentials of combination and association. And as by your chemical or physical knowledge you control material phenomena, in the same way by the occult knowledge you control subtle phenomena, make them active and effective. The procedure also is quite scientific. It is to be learnt exactly as you do a science. It is not a matter of feeling or emotion: it is nothing vague or uncertain. You must work as in a laboratory. You have to learn the laws of action and reaction and apply them. Only there are not many people to teach you. Also it is not without danger. There are in this field combinations as explosive as any chemical combination.

It is a thing, however, that can be learnt. But one must have the aptitude. If you have the power latent

in you, you can develop it by practice; but if you have not, you can try for 50 years, it will come to nothing. Everybody cannot have the occult power; it is as if you said that everybody in the world could be a musician or a painter or a poet. There are people who can and there are those who cannot. Usually, if you are interested in the subject, unless it is a mere idle curiosity, it is a sign that you have the gift. You then try. But, as I say, it is to be done with great precaution.

Thus, for example, when one goes out of the body—I have often spoken to you of this phenomenon—even if it be just to a little extent, even if only mentally—then what goes out is a part of the consciousness that controls the normal activities of the body, what remains is the portion that is automatic, producing the spontaneous involuntary movements such as blood circulation or secretion etc.; also other nervous or automatic thought movements; this region is no longer under the control of the conscious thinking part. Now, there is always in the atmosphere around you a good number of small entities, quite small often, that are generally formed out of the disintegrated remains of a dead human being: they are like microbes, the microbes of the vital. They have forms and can be visible and they have a will of their own. You may not say they are always wicked, but they are full of mischief, that is to say, they like amusing themselves at the cost of human beings. As soon as they see that someone is not sufficiently protected, they rush in and take possession of the automatic

mentality and bring about all kinds of disagreeable happenings—nightmares, various physical disturbances —you feel choked, bite or swallow your tongue and even more serious things. When you wish to go into trance, to have the experience of being outside the body, you must have someone by your side, not only to keep watch on your physical body, but also to prevent the vital entities from getting possession of the nerve centres which, as I said, are no longer under the control and protection of the conscious intelligence. There is a still greater danger. When one goes out of the body in a more or less concrete or material way, retaining only a thin and fragile contact—a thread of light, as it were —with the body, this thread of contact must be protected, for the attack of the hostiles may come upon it and cut it; if it is cut one can no longer return into the body, and that means death.

All that signifies that occultism is not a joke or a mere play; you cannot take to it simply to amuse yourself. It must be done as it ought to be done, under proper conditions and with great care. The one thing absolutely essential is, I repeat once more, to be totally fearless. If you happen to meet in your dreams terrible scenes and are frightened, then you must not approach occultism. If, on the contrary, you can remain perfectly tranquil in the face of the most frightful menaces causing you only amusement, if you can handle such situations safely and successfully, that would show that you have some capacity and then you can try seriously. There are people who

are real fighters in their sleep; if they meet an enemy they can face him, they can not only defend, but can attack and conquer.

MEDITATION AND SOME QUESTIONS

Why am I unable to meditate?

BECAUSE you have not learnt it. A sudden fancy seizes you and you say, "Now I will sit down and meditate". But to sit down cross-legged, cross-armed, eyes closed is not doing meditation. You have to learn how to meditate, even as you learn to do mathematics or play on the piano. There are regular courses of meditation given by all teachers in all ages and countries. There are so many rules and regulations. There are all kinds of instructions, such as, to keep the mind quiet, to be silent and not to think, to gather all your thoughts and concentrate them etc., etc. You have been taught how to sit, stand, walk, eat: you do not remember the method and the discipline, because you did that when you were very young. In the same way if you were taught how to meditate in your childhood, you would not find it difficult to do today. Unfortunately you were not taught. You are not taught things of that kind. You are not taught even how to sleep. You think that to go to bed and lie down anyway is the way to sleep. Not at all. You are to learn to sleep exactly in the same way as you learn how to walk or eat. You do not learn so many things, you are not taught. As you grow in years, slowly, laboriously through unpleasant experiences, through suffer-

ing and blundering, in the end you come to know of certain fundamental things. And when you are old, and your hairs are grey, you see you are beginning to learn something, when, that is to say, it is too late. Instead of that, if your parents, the people who looked after you took the trouble of teaching you what you have to do, to do it well—to act well, to think well, to feel well, in the correct manner—then you could avoid all the blunders you have been making all your life. You are surprised when you fall ill, when you feel tired and exhausted. For you know nothing. It requires years to learn something, to learn even the most elementary things such as to be clean.

To live as one should, in the right way, is a very difficult art. It requires study, it requires practice. Try simply to keep the body healthy, the mind quiet, and the heart full of good will—these are some of the indispensable elements for the basis of decent living; you will see the thing is not easy.

Is some kind of work necessary for us to do, apart from our study?

That depends upon you, upon your aim. If you wish to do sadhana, you should naturally give at least some time to a work that is not selfish, that is, not done for the sake of yourself. Study is very good, very necessary, even indispensable; precisely because it is just one of the things I referred to a little while ago, which you

should learn when you are young, it becomes difficult when you are grown up. There may come, of course, an age when you have done the basic studies and when you have the urge to do sadhana. Then you must take up something which is not exclusively personal. You must do something disinterested, not concerned with yourself. If you are concerned with yourself only, you shut yourself within a kind of shell and you are not open to the universal forces. An unselfish movement, an unselfish action, however small, opens the door to something other than your little self. Normally you are imprisoned in your shell and you know of the existence of other similar shells only when you knock against them. But to be aware of the one Force that pervades all, of the mutual dependence of things and beings is quite another matter: it is the indispensable basis for Sadhana.

But cannot one study for the sake of the Divine, to prepare oneself for the divine work?

One can. But that requires quite a different attitude. You have to study in altogether another spirit. First of all, there would be no subject that pleases you, none that displeases you, neither a class that bores you, nor one that amuses you. There would be no difficult lessons nor easy lessons, neither would there be a teacher who is unpleasant nor another who is pleasant. All such likes and dislikes, prejudices and preferences disappear. You are in a condition when you begin to learn from everything

that you meet with, everything is an occasion for an experience, a knowledge: everything prepares you for the divine work, everything is interesting. If you study in that spirit, it is quite all right.

How is it that so much money is allowed to be wasted here? People entrusted with a work seem to spend lavishly according to their fancy!

Money is not the only thing that is wasted. The Energy, the Consciousness is wasted a thousand times more, infinitely more than money. There is not a second when there is no wastage, sometimes worse things are there. There is a habit, I hope it is unconscious, to take in as much energy, as much consciousness as one is capable of and then use it for one's personal satisfaction. It is a thing happening every minute. If all this energy, all this consciousness that is being ceaselessly poured upon you all were used for the right purpose, that is to say, for the divine work, for preparing the divine work, we would have gone by now far on the road, much farther than where we are at present. But unfortunately everyone, if not consciously, at least instinctively, absorbs as much as possible this divine gift and misuses it for selfish ends.

Who thinks of it?—that this Force is there which is infinitely greater, infinitely more precious than all money power, this force is there and is being given consciously, constantly, with an endless patience and perseverance

with a single end in view, that of accomplishing the divine work—I say, who thinks of not wasting it? Who recollects that it is a sacred duty for all to progress, to prepare themselves so that they may understand better and live better? It is because you live by the divine energy and the divine consciousness that you are able to live upon them, spend them for your own self's sake. People are shocked when they see a few thousand rupees wasted, but they do not notice that a whole flood of consciousness and knowledge is being turned aside from its true direction.

If one wants to do a divine work upon earth, one must come there with tons of patience and endurance, one must be able to live in eternity and wait till consciousness awakes in every one, the consciousness of true honesty.

MEDITATION AND MEDITATION

SOME people, when they sit for meditation, think they go into a remarkable condition and are proud of it. But most often what they do in meditation is simply to let loose their thoughts: it is a sort of kaleidoscope that moves in their head. There are some, however, who can remain without any thought for a while; but if they are called out all on a sudden at the time for some reason or other, they wake up furious, saying a nice meditation is spoilt and fret and fume against the whole world. There are all the same a few who know how to meditate, they do come to a sort of union with the Divine. Certainly, this is very good. There are others who can follow the train of an idea up to a point, even up to the central point of the idea. This is also very good. But most get into a half-sleepy condition, that is to say, very tamasic. The mind is inert, aspiration inert, the whole being is inert. They can remain in that condition for hours together. Well, nothing is more durable than inertia. And when they come out of it, they think they have achieved something very great. But they simply fell into unconsciousness.

Yes, some know how to meditate. But even supposing you know how to enter into the divine consciousness, that experience must have some effect upon your external life—naturally it would differ according to the person concerned. There are some who cut themselves clean

into two. These, as I have said, when they enter into meditation, have or think they have experiences and very fine experiences. But when they come back and begin to act, they become the most ordinary people, with the most ordinary reactions, doing all kinds of things that should not be done. They think of themselves alone, busy arranging their own life, without a thought for others, whether one could be useful to the world or not. And yet in meditation, they came into contact with some higher and deeper consciousness and reality. It is for this reason that people who have found it difficult to change human nature, have declared it an impossibility and advised that the one thing to do under the circumstances is to abandon the world and escape. Naturally, if all could run away there would no more be any world. But, luckily or unluckily, the existence of the world does not depend upon the will of individuals: they had no hand in the creation of the world and they do not know how it came about. Is it simply because some get away from the world that the world will cease to exist—for them, perhaps, but for others? Although I am not sure whether even they really succeed in getting away. In any case, I do not believe that you can transform yourself by meditation. But when a work is there before you and you do it as well as you can, also while doing it you take care not to forget the Divine and you give yourself up to him so that he may change your being, change your reactions into something beautiful and luminous, then indeed the Divine will transform you.

I have never seen people who left off everything to sit in a more or less empty meditation making any progress; in any case their progress is very small. On the contrary, I have seen people, full of enthusiasm for the work of transformation in the world, devote themselves to that work without reservation: they give themselves up with no idea of personal salvation. Yes, it is such people I have seen making the most wonderful progress. On the other hand I have seen very many living in monasteries: well, they are not worth talking about. It is not by running away from the world that you will change it: it is only by working steadily at it that you can bring about the change.

Does this mean that meditation is of no use at all?

Meditation will come to you as much as is necessary for you. When it comes it seizes you; then you should not resist. You sit down and go within yourself, withdraw yourself inside and you make the needed inner advance. When that is done you come out and start again with your work. But above all, do not be vain. People who believe they are exceptional creatures and have more merit, put a bar to all their progress. I must insist on the need of humility. People have often spoken much about it but without understanding it very well. Be humble, but in the right way. If you could but root out this weed that is vanity! How difficult it is, yes, how difficult! You cannot do a single good thing, make the slightest progress, without being puffed up secretly somewhere, cherishing a

hidden self-satisfaction! You have to deal hammer blows to break that hard core of egoism. You have to work all your life to destroy this poisonous herb. You think you have done it and you are so satisfied with the idea of having done it at last.

PRAYER AND ASPIRATION

THERE are many kinds of prayers. There is one external and physical, that is to say, simply words learnt by rote and repeated mechanically. It does not mean much. It has usually one result, however, making you quiet. If you go on repeating a few words or sounds for some time, it puts you into a state of calmness in the end. There is another kind which is the natural expression of a wish; you want a particular thing and you express it clearly. You can pray for an object or for a circumstance, you can pray also for a person or for yourself. There is still another kind in which the prayer borders on aspiration and the two meet: it is the spontaneous formulation of a living experience; it shoots out of the depth of your being, it is the utterance of something lived within: it wants to express gratitude for the experience, asks for its continuation or seeks an explanation. It is then what I said almost an aspiration. Aspiration, however, does not necessarily formulate itself in words; if it uses words at all, it makes of them a kind of invocation. Thus, you wish to be in a certain condition. You have, for example, found in you something which is not in harmony with your ideal, a movement of obscurity or ignorance or even bad will. You wish to see it changed. You do not express the thing in so many words, but it rises up in you like a flame, an ardent offering of the experience itself which seeks increase

and greatening, to be made more clear and precise. It is true all this is capable of being expressed in words, if one tries to recall and note down the experience. But the experience, the aspiration itself is, as I say, like a flame shooting up and contains within it the very thing it asks for. I say "asks for", but the movement is not at all that of a desire; it is truly a flame, the flame of purifying will carrying at its centre the very object which it wished to be realised. The discovery of a fault in you impels you to make it an occasion for more progress, for greater self-discipline, for further ascension towards the Divine. It opens out a door upon your future, which you wish to be clearer, truer, intenser; all that gathers in you like a concentrated force and hurls you up in a movement of ascension. It needs no expression in words. It is indeed a flame that leaps up. Such is true aspiration. Prayer usually is something much more external; it is about a very precise object. It is always formulated; for the formulation itself makes what a prayer is. You may have an aspiration and you can transcribe it into a prayer, but the aspiration itself exceeds the prayer. It is something much more intimate, much more self-forgetful, living only in the object it wishes to be or to do, almost identified with it. A prayer can be of a very high quality. Instead of being a request for a fulfilment of your particular desire, it may express your thankfulness and gratefulness for what the Divine has done and is doing for you. You are not busy with your little self and its egoistic interests, you ask for the Divine's ways in you and in the world.

This leads you to the border of aspiration. For aspiration too has many degrees and it is expressed on many levels. But the core of aspiration is in the psychic being, it is there at its purest, for there is its origin and source. Prayers come from the other, the lower or secondary levels of being. That is to say, there are physical or material prayers, asking for physical or material things, vital prayers, mental prayers: there are psychic prayers and spiritual prayers too. Each has its own character and its own value. I say again there is a certain type of prayer which is so spontaneous and so disinterested, more like an appeal or a call, generally not for one's own sake, but acting sometimes like an intercession with the Divine on behalf of others. Such a prayer is extremely powerful. I have seen innumerable cases where such a prayer had brought about its immediate fulfilment. It means a great faith, a great fervour, a great sincerity and also a great simplicity of heart, something which does not calculate, which does not bargain or barter, does not give with the idea of receiving. The majority of prayers are precisely made with the idea of giving so that one may receive. But I was speaking of the rarer variety which also does exist, which is a kind of thanksgiving, a canticle or a hymn.

To sum up then it can be said that a prayer is always formed of words. Words have different values, according to the state of consciousness of the person when he formulates it. But always prayer is a formulated thing. But one can aspire without formulating. And then, prayer

needs a person to whom one prays. There is, of course, a certain class of people whose conception of the universe is such that there is no room in it for the Divine (the famous French scientist Laplace, for example). Such people are not likely to favour the existence of any being superior to themselves to whom they can appeal or look up for guidance and help. There is no question of prayer for them. But even they, though they may not pray, may aspire. They may not believe in God, but they may believe, for example, in progress. They may conceive of the world as a progressive movement, that it is becoming better and better, rising higher and higher, growing constantly to a nobler fulfilment. They can ask for, will for, aspire for such progress; they need not look for the Divine. Aspiration requires faith, certainly, but not faith necessarily in a personal God. But prayer is always addressed to a person, a person who hears it and grants it. There lies the great difference between the two. Intellectual people admit aspiration, but prayer they consider as something inferior, fit for unintellectual persons. The mystics say, aspiration is quite all right, but if your aspiration is to be heard and fulfilled, you must also pray, know how to pray and to whom—who else but the Divine? The aspiration need not be towards any person; the aspiration is not for a person, but for a state of consciousness, a knowledge, a realisation. Prayer adds to it the relation to a person. Prayer is a personal thing addressed to a person for a thing which he alone can grant.

OFFERING AND SURRENDER

THEY are not quite the same thing: they are rather two aspects of the same thing. They do not belong altogether to the same level of consciousness. For example, you have resolved to make an offering of your life to the Divine. All on a sudden there happens a very unpleasant thing: you did not expect it. Your first movement is to react and protest. And yet you have made the offering; but something in you turns. If you are, however, consistent in your offering, you will hold the protesting part in your hands and put it before the Divine and say, "let thy will be done". In surrender, on the other hand, there is a natural spontaneous unprotesting adhesion. Even if there happens something unpleasant or contrary to your expectations, you are equally unperturbed and tranquil.

In the beginning you make a general surrender or submission, in principle, as it were: it is in your inner being. It must be brought forth gradually in the outer being, carried out in all the details of life. That is how difficulties arise. You have made your offering, you say, even you have worked at it for a long time, worked hard, given much time and much will; suddenly you find, upsetting your calculations, something different happens, you have not succeeded in something. So there is a revolt, a turning back and so on. But what you have to

do is to renew your offering, reaffirm your adhesion. When the adhesion is complete, when there is the spontaneous acceptance of the Divine Will in everything, in every manner of happening, then comes the surrender, the perfect obedience which is calm, tranquil, at peace in either case, whether things happen in this way or that.

You ask if you cannot make a mistake unwittingly, do a wrong even if you do not want to. It is not likely. If you are sincere to the core, you are always conscious and you cannot be taken unawares. It is some form or degree of insincerity that veils your sense of right and wrong, makes you unconscious, as it were. Your discrimination is clouded, because you wish things to happen in a way, or do not wish them to happen in another way. On the other hand, if you are straight, if you are indifferent to either way and await only the Divine's will, you will always immediately perceive if there is or likely to be a wrong move in you; you know it intimately in a very precise manner, for you are ready to rectify it.

Perfect sincerity does not want to err: it will give up everything rather than live in an illusion. It is a very precise movement, but it is also a very delicate movement. For when you do a thing, even the right thing, the mental and the vital are there that seek to profit by it, a profit, at least of personal satisfaction, to have a good opinion of oneself. It is difficult not to hoodwink oneself.

EQUALITY OF THE BODY—
EQUALITY OF THE SOUL

EQUALITY of the external being means good health, a solid body, controlled nerves—when you are not shaken by the least shock, when you are calm, quiet, poised, balanced. In that condition you can receive into you a great force in yourself from above (or, from the environing energy around you) and yet not get upset. If one of you at any time had received some such force, he must have known by experience that without a perfectly sound physical health, one could not contain or hold it. You cannot remain still, you are restless, you move about, talk, cry, weep, jump or dance, just to throw out the energy you are unable to hold. You scatter about what it is not possible for you to gather and assimilate. In order to be able to gather and assimilate the force, the body and the nerves must be quiet and strong.

Equality of the soul is different; it is psychological, not physical. It is the power to bear the impact of things, good or bad, without being grieved or elated, discouraged or enthused, without any upsetting or disturbance. Whatever happens you remain serene and at peace. But both the equalities are necessary. There are many equalities, in fact. Apart from the equality of the vital, and the equality of the body, there is also the equality of the mind proper. That is to say, all ideas from all quarters may

come into your head, even the most contradictory: yet you remain quiet, untroubled, and even unconcerned. You are a witness, you see them, sort them, arrange them, put each idea in its proper place, appreciate the value of each, determine the relation of each to the other, and to the whole, but you are not swayed by any particular one.

PERSONAL EFFORT AND WILL

IN personal effort there is a feeling of effort, of tension: the effort is felt as personal i.e. you rely upon yourself and you have the impression that if you do not do at each step what is to be done all will be lost. Will is different. It is the capacity to concentrate upon what one does so that it may be done well and to continue to do so till the thing is done.

Supposing under given circumstances a work has come upon you. Take an artist, for example, a painter. He has an inspiration and has decided to do a painting. He knows very well that if he has not the inspiration he will not be able to do anything good, the painting would be nothing more than a daub. If he is simply passive, with neither effort nor will, he would tell the Divine: Here I leave the palette, the brush and the canvas, you will do the painting now. But the Divine does not act in that way. The painter himself must arrange everything, concentrate upon his subject, put all his will upon a perfect execution. On the other hand, if he has not the inspiration, he may take all the trouble and yet the result be nothing more than a work like other thousands of examples. You must feel what your painting is to express and know or find out how to express it. A great painter often gets a very exact vision of the painting he is to do. He has the vision and he sets himself to work out the

vision. He labours day by day, with a will and consciousness, to reproduce as exactly as possible what he sees clearly with his inner sight. He works for the Divine; his surrender is active and dynamic. For the poet too it is the same thing. Anyone who wants to do something for the Divine, it is the same.

HOW TO FEEL THAT WE BELONG TO THE DIVINE

How to feel that we belong to the Divine and that the Divine is acting in us?

NOT with the head, although one can always begin by it; for the light touches the head first. One must feel with one's sensation, that is, sense it in a flaming aspiration that seeks to realise. For example, as it may happen sometimes to an athlete: supposing you are trying to lift a heavy weight and are intensely concentrated upon it. Suddenly you feel without your knowing it how, that another Force is lifting it up, something has taken hold of your hands and is making them do the impossible. The body seems to be inexistent at that moment. Many writers too have the same experience. Something in them which is not their own self thinks, sees much more clearly, is infinitely more conscious, and organises the thoughts and the words. It is not the writer that writes but this something else. At such times the small person which struggles and attempts is no longer there. Indeed, for the experience to be complete and not to disturb it, the physical person must keep quiet as much as possible.

To have such an experience, you must first have the will for it; you must will and aspire, try to be less and less an egoist, to have less and less the feeling of being a parti-

cular person. You must have then within you this flame, this ardent yearning, this need of union. It is a kind of luminous enthusiasm that possesses you, an irresistible necessity of your being to dissolve in the divine and not to be separately. True, it is a state that does not last long—in the beginning—you have the contrary experience immediately after. But if you continue, persist in your will and aspiration, the other state will come again. The two alternate for a time till the complete fusion is achieved. Finally there is no longer the distinction of your personal being and the Divine Being, the two are one. There is no more the state of yearning towards, an ecstatic sense of submission in which the two are still separate. The state of fusion and mingling, of complete identity is extremely simple and supremely spontaneous. I heard once from an Indian Sufi at Paris of this state of consciousness. They too knew of it.

Is that then the final stage, no more progress after that?

There is no end to progress. For, this perfect union can happen before the transformation of the body. The union is a thing of the consciousness. There is a great difference between even physical consciousness and physical matter. The most advanced mystic may get to the realisation in the physical consciousness, but that does not include physical matter. The transformation of the material body has not been done nor even attempted perhaps in the past. It can be done only if life is sufficiently pro-

longed; you do not leave the body unless you will it so and thus have the necessary time at your disposal to bring about the change. Sri Aurobindo once said—and he said it without the least hesitation—that it will take about three hundred years to do it, I can add, from the time when the last stage of union with the Divine I have described is achieved.

Three hundred years is the minimum, I should say. You must realise what it means to transform the body. The body with all its organs and functionings works automatically without the intervention of your consciousness, and is built upon an animal plan. If your heart stops for the hundredth part of a second, your body goes off. You cannot do without a single of your organs and you must keep watch over their proper functioning. Transformation means the replacement of this purely material arrangement by a systematic concentration of forces. You must bring about an arrangement of forces, according to a certain kind of vibrations, replacing each organ by a centre of self-conscious energy which governs through the concentration of a higher force. There will no longer be a stomach, no more a heart even. These things will give place to a system of vibrations which respresent what they really are. The material organs are symbols of energy centres; they are not the essential reality, they only give a form or figure to it under certain circumstances. The transformed body will function through its real energy centres, not through their representatives as developed in an animal body. For that you must first of all be

conscious of these centres and their functionings; instead of an unconscious automatic movement there has to be a movement of conscious control. Thus one will have at his disposal not physical animal organs but the symbolic vibrations, the symbolic energies. This does not mean that there will not be any definite recognizable form. The form will be built up with qualities rather than with solid (dust) particles. It will be so to say a practical or pragmatic form: it will be supple and mobile, unlike the fixed grossly material shape. As the expression of your face changes with your feeling, impulsion, even so the body will change according to the need of the inner movement: have you never had this kind of experience in your dream? You rise up in the air and you give as it were a push with your elbow in one direction and your body extends that way; you give a kick with your foot and you land somewhere else: you can be transparent at will and go easily through a solid wall! The transformed body will behave somewhat in the same way, it will be light, luminous, elastic. Lightness, luminosity, elasticity will be the very fundamental qualities of the body.

To prepare such a body 300 years is nothing; even a thousand years will not be too much. Naturally, I am speaking of the same body. If you change your body in between, it will no longer be the same body. At 50 the body already begins to wear out. But, on the contrary, if you have a body that goes on perfecting itself, if each passing year represents a step in progress, then you can continue indefinitely: for after all, you are immortal.

There is another difficulty one has to face in the work of transformation. A particular body cannot change unless there is some sort of a corresponding change in the surrounding bodies and in the surroundings generally also; for one lives and moves through mutual interchange in the midst of others. A collective change takes more time than individual change. So it is no longer an individual consciousness, but the collective consciousness that has to do the work.

The world progresses. And being in the world you too must progress. It is a progress, however, which the Divine effects in you without your knowledge or collaboration. The progress is therefore very slow; Nature does not calculate the time she takes for her work, she has eternity before her and she is not in a hurry. Centuries and millenniums are mere instants in her march forward. One day she will arrive at the goal she has fixed for her, even at the complete transformation of the body and the advent of the superman. But the work will be hastened if there is conscious collaboration from man. Most people, by far the largest majority indeed, are not conscious of the action of the Divine in them. To be conscious means to be attentive to what is being done, to be receptive and to be passive to its influence. The more you give yourself and the more sincere you are, the swifter and the more assured is your realisation. You can do in a few moments what would otherwise take years. That is the aim of Yoga.

SINCERITY IS VICTORY

To be sincere and to be candid are not the same thing. To be candid means a simplicity based, in a large measure, upon an ignorance of things. A child is candid, because he is simple and ignorant and hides nothing; he is incapable of it and has no will to deceive anyone. But sincerity is different.

Sincerity is a most difficult thing to have, but it is also the most effective of things. If you have sincerity, you are sure of victory. But it must be true sincerity. Sincerity means that all the elements of your being, all its movements, each and every one, from the most spiritual to the most physical, from the inmost to the outermost, from the topmost to the bottom-most, all parts, severally and wholly and equally are turned to the Divine, they ask for nothing else than the Divine, they live for and by the Divine.

And it is not an easy thing. To be sincere in a part, to be sincere on the whole, to be sincere at moments is easy enough; everybody can have or achieve that much. It is within the capacity of any human being with normal good will, to be sincere in his psychic movements, even if these are rare. But to be sincere in the very cells of your physical body is a still rarer and arduous achievement. To make the body cells so one-pointed that they too feel they cannot live but for the Divine and in and

through the Divine. That is true sincerity and that is what you must have.

First you must observe that there is not a day in your life, not an hour, not even a minute when you have not got to rectify or intensify your sincerity. I do not say that you deceive the Divine. None can deceive the Divine, not even the greatest of the Asuras. When you have understood that, still then you will always find moments in your everyday life when you try to deceive yourself. Almost automatically you bring forward reasons in favour of whatever you do. I do not speak of grosser things as when you have quarrelled with a person, for example, and in your anger throw the whole blame upon him. I knew a child who gave a good blow to the door, because it thought the door was at fault. It is always the other party who is in the wrong. But even when you have passed beyond this baby stage, when you are supposed to be a little more reasonable, you do the stupidest of things and produce reasons in self-justification. The real test of sincerity, the very minimum of true sincerity lies here; in your reaction to a given situation, whether you can take automatically the right attitude and do exactly the thing to be done. When, for example, one speaks angrily to you, do you catch the contagion and become angry on your side also or are you able to maintain an unshakable calm and lucidity, see the other man's point or behave as one should?

This is, I say, the very beginning of sincerity, its rudiments. And if you look into you with keener eyes,

you will discover thousands of insincerities, more subtle, none the less seizable. Try to be sincere, occasions will multiply when you catch yourself insincere: you will know how difficult a thing it is. You say you belong to the Divine, to the Divine alone and to nothing or to nobody else; "it is the Divine who moves me and does everything in me". And then you do whatever pleases you; you use the Divine as a cloak to cover your indulgence of desires and passions. This also is a gross insincerity and it should not be difficult for you to detect it. Although this is a very common deception, more perhaps to deceive others than to deceive oneself. The mind catches hold of an idea, "all this is Brahman", "I am Brahman",—and you believe or pretend to believe that you have realised it and you can do nothing wrong. There are however subtler movements of insincerity or want of sincerity, even when you have not put on the divine cloak as the cover for your lapses. Even when you think you are sincere there may be movements which are not quite straight, behind which, if you probe unflinchingly, you will find lurking something undesirable. Look to the little movements, thoughts, sensations and impulses, that crowd the margin of your daily life; how many of them are solely turned to the Divine, how many of them are fired with an aspiration towards something higher? You should consider yourself fortunate if you find a few of the kind.

When I say that if you are sincere you are sure of victory, I mean that kind of sincerity, whole and

undivided: the pure flame that burns like an offering, the intense joy of existing for the Divine alone where nothing else exists, nothing has any meaning or reason for existence but in the Divine. Nothing has value or interest if it is not this call, this aspiration, this opening to the supreme truth; all this that we call the Divine. You must serve the only reason for which the universe exists: take it away, all disappears.

IMAGES OF GODS AND GODDESSES

Are the usual images of gods and goddesses true to reality?

WELL, when a little child draws a picture of an object, is there any likeness? It is about the same or even worse here. For the child is simple and sincere, while the image-maker is full of prejudices and preconceived ideas, stuffed with things he has heard or read. And he is tied to his constructions. But at times, here and there, very rarely indeed, artists appear with an inner vision, with a great aspiration and a great purity of soul; they do things that are acceptable. But they are exceptions, the contrary is the rule.

I have seen some of these forms in the vital world and also in the mental world; they are truly creations of man. There is a Power from beyond that manifests, but in this triple world of Ignorance man creates God Himself in his own image and beings that appear there are more or less the outcome of the creative human thought. So at times we do have things that are truly frightful. I have seen formations that are so obscure, so ununderstandable, so inexpressive! There are some divine beings that are treated worse than the others. Take, for example, this poor Mahakali. What has man made of her, wildly terrible, a nightmare beyond imagination! Such creations however live in a very inferior world, in the lowest vital

world; and if there is anything there of the original being, it is such a far reflection that it is hardly recognisable. And yet it is that which is pulled by the human consciousness. When, for example, an image is made and installed and the priest calls down into it a form, an emanation of a god, through an inner invocation—there is usually a whole ceremony in this connection—if the priest is someone having the power of evocation, then the thing succeeds (what Ramkrishna did in the Kali temple). But generally priests are people with the commonest ideas and the most traditional training and education; when they think of the gods they give them attributes and appearances which are popular, which belong normally to entities of the vital world, at best to mental formations but which do not represent in any way the truth of the beings behind. All idols in temples or the household gods worshipped by the many are inhabited by beings who know only how to lead you to unhappiness and disaster. They are so far away from the divinity that one means to worship. There are certain family Kalis that are real monsters. I have even advised some to throw such an image into the Ganges to get rid of the evil influence emanating from it. But of course it is always the fault of man and not of the divinity. For man wishes so much to make his gods in his own image.

Section Five

THE YOGIC CENTRES

THERE are, of course, the seven well-known yoga-centres in the human body. They are, beginning from below, (1) the end of the spine, (2) the lower abdomen, (3) the navel, (4) the heart, (5) the throat, (6) between the eyebrows and (7) the crown of the head. But there are others extending from below the spine which are not so well-known. It is true, however, that the centres in the individual being end with the spine; what is below belongs more to the universal nature. There is a centre above and beyond the crown; there is also, on the other side, a centre below and away from under the feet. The yoga-centres are centres of consciousness and energy; they are the sources of the various types and qualities of consciousness and energy—they indicate the many planes of consciousness-energy. There are people who actually feel that their force and strength come from below, as if these stream into them like a spring from under the feet. This region from below the spine-end to the feet is that of the subconscient and what extends further down is the domain of the inconscient. We may distinguish five more centres in this lower or infra-spinal region apart from the spine-end itself (*mulādhāra*), (1) the knee, (2) the leg, (3) the feet, (4) the sole of the foot and (5) below the feet. That would make the total number

of centres as twelve—the mystic number for completeness or integrality.

The centre at the bottom of the spine, which is the basis of the individual consciousness is seen as a serpent —a serpent coiled up and asleep, with perhaps just the head sticking up in a very somnolent manner. It represents the normal human consciousness, bottled up, narrow, ignorant, asleep; human energy, too, at this level is obscure and mechanical, extremely limited. The whole energy potential, the consciousness-force is locked up in the physical body consciousness. Now the serpent does not remain asleep forever. It has to wake up, it wakes up. That is to say, man's consciousness awakes, grows and rises upward. The serpent one day shakes its head, lifts it up a little more, begins to sway its hood, as if trying to throw off the sleep and look about. It slowly uncoils itself and rises more and more. It rises and passes through the centres one by one, becomes more and more awake, gathers new light and potency at each centre. Finally, fully awakened, it rises to its full height, erect, straight like a rod, its tail-end at the bottom of the spine and its hood touching the crown of the man's head. The man is then the fully awakened, the perfectly self-conscious man. The movement does not stop there, however; for the serpent presses further on, it strikes with its hood the bottom of the crown and in the end breaks through and passes beyond like a flash of lightning. One need not fear the break through, there is no actual, physical breaking or fracture of the

skull. Although it is said that once you have gone over and beyond your head, you are not likely to return, you go for good. In other words, the body does not hold together very long after the experience, it drops and dies. And yet it need not be so, it is not the whole truth. For when you have gone beyond, you can come back too, carrying the superconscient light with you. That is to say, the serpent, now luminous,—pure and free energy —can enter the body again, this time with its head down and the tail up. It enters blazing, illumining with its superconscient light the centres one by one, giving man richer and richer consciousness, energy and life, transforming the being more and more. The Light comes down easily enough to the heart region; then the difficulty begins, the regions below gradually become darker and denser and it is hard task for the Light to penetrate as it goes further down. If it succeeds in reaching the bottom of the spine, it has achieved something miraculous. But there is a further progress necessary, if man—and the world with him—is to realise a wholly transformed supraconscient life. In other words, the Light must touch and enter not only the physical stratum of our being but the others too that lie below, the subconscient and inconscient. That has been till now a sealed dungeon, something impossible to approach and tackle.

And yet it is not an impossibility. Not only it is not impossible, we have to make it possible. Not only so, man's destiny demands that it should be inevitable. If man is to be a transformed being, if he is to incarnate

here below something of the Divine Reality, if his social life on earth is to be the expression of the light and harmony of the Spirit Consciousness, then he has to descend into these nether regions, break open the nethermost as he has done in regard to the uppermost and unite the two.

Here is a curious story about man and his destiny. What is he, the normal man? He is a slave, a bond slave. He may have the illusion that he has ideas and movements, his own, he has even free scope to put them to execution. But it will not take long to discover that it is an illusion, a great deception. His plans do not mature, his efforts beat against an iron wall. The more he observes and sees things squarely he finds that he is bound hand and foot. He is driven by forces and things over which he has no control whatsoever. He is a slave to circumstances; he is checked by the will of others. His own will has no power or scope; it is wholly ineffectual. He feels more and more a great burden pressing upon the back of the head bending it down, a heavy weight lies upon his shoulders. He somehow trudges on like a beast of burden. He has no free choice or will; his wishes and desires are not consulted. He is driven helplessly on.

But the story does not end here. Man can, if he chooses, alter the situation, turn the tables. He has in him the source of freedom—what he vaguely feels in his outer consciousness; there is a centre from where he is capable of reacting and reasserting. It is the centre

where lies his *dharma*, the law of his being. It is his soul. If he once comes in contact with that, makes that the base of his life, he is free from that moment. He holds his head erect. He is no longer bent down. The burden of inexorable circumstances weighs no more on him. He has transcended the circumstances, he stands over them, looks over them. He is now the master and they obey him, he has not to obey them.

This consummation is supremely effected when there is the double breaking of the barrier I was speaking about. The first is the piercing of the veil above, when the consciousness rises into the superconscient, takes the human being into the divine being; the second is the rending of the lower veil and the descent of the divine consciousness into the most material, the subconscient and the inconscient, realising the divine life on earth.

THE INNER AND THE OUTER

THE external part of the being is turned to the Divine: you are conscious of your ideal and as much as possible you conform your behaviour to it. You appear what you want to be. But just behind the line, on the other side of your consciousness—in the subconscious, as it is called —the picture is different. The light has not touched there: the movements go the other way. Things—thoughts, impulses, feelings—hide which you would not like to own. Not that you consciously and deliberately hide them: but they are there as inevitable part and parcel of the original ordinary nature. They form the back-yard of the consciousness; there are all kinds of nooks and corners, if not quite open spaces, which have accumulated darkness and dirt. This two-sidedness is common, in fact, universal; you have to be one-sided, that is, of one piece, wholly turned to the light. You must be conscious of these hidden elements and bring them out, expose them to the light calmly, candidly, fearlessly, so that the luminous force may act on them. They have to be drawn out and rejected, or if possible, to be purified and changed. Some are capable of change and become right movements; others are wholly wrong, they belong to the inferior consciousness and have to be cast away without pity.

AND THIS AGILE REASON

REASON is an agility gymnast. It can move in all varieties of ways, make infinite twists, the most impossible contortions with equal ease and skill. It does not seek the truth, although it may pretend to do so; for it cannot find the truth. The law of uncertainty or indeterminacy seems also to be the last word of modern Science. What Reason does and can do is to justify, find arguments for whatever position it is put in or called upon to support. Its business is to supply "proofs": it can do so as the spider brings out of itself the whole warp and woof of the cobweb. There is no truth, that is to say, no conclusion which it cannot demonstrate and all with equal cogency. That was indeed the great discovery of the great Kant who described it as the antinomies of Reason. Reason finds it infinitely exhilarating to *pirouette ad infinitum*, i.e., beating about the bush without caring to look for the fact or reality hidden in the bush.

Is it then to say that this faculty is a falsehood and that it can lead you only to falsehood? Not necessarily. It becomes a falsehood when you try to live according to it, according to an idea or ideas it has taken a fancy to; for then it is bound to land you in contradictions. Otherwise, if it is not a question of practical application, if it is merely a play or playfulness in the mental world, it is harmless acrobatics; and even in its own way it can be of

some use in making your brain sharp, alert, strong and supple.

Reason is a bad master; a free-lance, it often goes amuck. But controlled and yoked, reined in and guided by the higher light, it is a help, even a necessity; for it gives the immediate form in which to hold and fix in the physical world the truth-movements of the higher consciousness.

THE FORCE OF BODY-CONSCIOUSNESS

THERE is a state of consciousness in which you perceive that the effect of things, circumstances, movements, all the activities of life upon yourself depends almost exclusively upon your attitude towards them. You become then conscious, conscious to the extent of realising that things in themselves are neither good nor bad, they are so only in relation to ourselves: their effect, I say, depends entirely upon the way in which we regard these things. If we take, for example, a circumstance as a gift from God, as a divine Grace, as an outcome of the total harmony, it will help us to become more conscious and truer and stronger. The same identical circumstance, if we take it differently, as a blow of Fate, as a bad force wishing us harm, becomes, on the contrary, a damper on our consciousness, it takes away our strength, brings obscurity, creates disharmony. And yet in either case it is altogether the same circumstance. I would like you to have the experience and make the experiment. For your ideal is to be master of yourselves. But not that only. You should not only be master of your own selves, but master of the circumstances of your life, the circumstances, at least, that immediately surround you and concern you. You must note further that it is an experience that is not confined to the mind alone: it need not happen in your head only, it may and indeed must continue into the body.

Certainly, this is a realisation needing great labour, much concentration and self-mastery: you have to force the consciousness into the body, into dense Matter. It is the attitude of the body that will in the end determine everything: shocks and contacts of the outside world will change its nature according to the way in which they are received by the body. And if you attain perfection in that line, you can become even master of accidents. Such a thing is possible, not only possible, but it is sure to happen, for it is a forward step in man's progress. First of all, you have to realise the power in your mind to the extent that it can act upon circumstances and change their effect upon you. Then the power can descend into Matter, into the substance, the cells of your body and endow the body with this capacity of control over things outside and around you.

There is nothing impossible in the world. We ourselves put the limit; always we say, this is possible, that is impossible, one can do this, one cannot do that. Sometimes we admit a thing to be possible but ask who would do it, so it is impossible and so on. Like slaves, like prisoners we bind ourselves to our limits. You call it common sense, but it is a stupid, narrow, ignorant sense; it does not truly know the laws of life. The laws of life are not what we think them to be, what our mind or intellect conceives them to be; they are quite otherwise.

THE BODY AND THE PSYCHIC

I

You ask why the body has a limited receptive power. The reason is that in the physical world things must not get mixed up, they must remain somewhat stable, in shape and position. For example, if your body suddenly began to melt and flow towards another, it would be rather troublesome; you would find it disgusting if the body of your neighbour, like a fiuid, were to pour into your own fluid body. It is to prevent such a mixture that a greater concentration in masses was necessary, a kind of fixity of force that separates them. Indeed it was to separate one individuality from another that this fixity was needed. And it is precisely this fixity again that prevents the body from progressing as rapidly as it could and should. As you grow up and attain your normal size and constitution, you become more and more rigid in your body. As a child you have this plasticity of growth. Children change continually, they change visibly. This plasticity, this growth and development continue, so long as you remain young. But beyond, say, forty, people generally feel that they have reached their goal, they sit down to gather the fruits of their labour; they gradually become dry as dust, hard like wood, and even like stone in the end. The body then not being able to

adapt itself to the movement of the inner change, gets fossilised and crumbles, which means death.

After death there is then no further progress?

That depends. There is a kind of progress sometimes. There are, for example, writers, musicians, artists, people who lived on a high mental level, who feel that they have yet something to do upon earth, they did not finish their work, fulfil their mission, reach the goal they set before them. So they wish to remain in the earth's atmosphere as much as possible, retain as much cohesion of their being as needed and seek to manifest themselves and progress through other living human forms. I have seen many such cases. I shall tell you the very interesting case of a musician, a pianist, a pianist of a very high order; he had hands that had become something marvellous, full of skill, accuracy, precision, force, swiftness; it was truly remarkable. The man died comparatively young and with the feeling that had he lived he would have continued to advance in his musical self-expression. Such was the intensity of his aspiration that his subtle hands retained their form without getting dissolved and wherever there was someone passive and receptive and at the same time good musician the hands of the dead man would enter into the living hands that played. In the case that I saw the man used to play well enough normally but quite in the ordinary way; he became, however, as he continued to play all on a sudden not

only a virtuoso, but a marvellous artist; it was the hands of the other person who made use of him. The same thing may happen with regard to a painter; in his case too, the hands are the instrument. For certain writers also a like thing may happen; but here it is the brain of the dead man that retains its formation and it is this that enters the brain of the living writer which must be receptive enough to allow the formation in all its precision. I have seen a writer who was nothing extraordinary in his normal capacity, but used to write things much more beautiful in those moments than he was capable of doing or was doing usually. I know the case of a musical composer, not executor like the one I cited before, which was particularly remarkable. In the case of the composer, like the writer, it is the brain that serves him; for the executor the hands are the chief instrument. Beethoven, Bach, Cesar Franck were great composers, although the last one was an executor also. The composition of music is a cerebral activity. Now the brain of a great musician used to enter in contact with that of the composer and made him compose marvellous pieces. The man was writing a musical opera. You must remember what a complicated thing an opera music is. It is a complex whole in which roles are distributed to a very large number of performers each playing differently on different instrument and they must all of them together and severally express the idea and the theme the composer has in his mind. Now, this man I am speaking of, when he sat down with the blank paper in

front, used to receive the musical formation in his brain and wrote down continuously as if he was recording something ready-made placed before him. I saw him filling up a whole page from top to bottom with all the details of orchestration. He had no need to hear any instrument, he did it all on paper; and the distribution was perfect. He himself was not very unconscious, he used to feel that something entered into him and helped him to bring out the music.

You must note here that when I speak of a formation entering into a living person, the formation does not mean the man himself who is dead, that is to say, his soul or psychic being. I say that it is only a special faculty which continues to remain in the earth atmosphere, even after the death of the man to whom the faculty belonged: it was so well developed, well formed that it continues to retain its independent identity. The soul, the true being of the man is no longer there; I have told you often that after death it goes away as soon as possible to the psychic world, its own world, for rest, assimilation and preparation. Not that it cannot happen otherwise. A soul incarnating as a great musician may incarnate again in or as a great musician, although I said in another connection that a soul usually prefers to vary, even to contrast and contradict its incarnations with each other. Take, for example, the great violinist, Isaîe; he was a Belgian and the most marvellous violonist of his century. I knew him and I am sure he was an incarnation, at least, an emanation, of the soul that was the

great Beethoven. It may not have been the whole psychic being that so reincarnated, but the soul in its musical capacity. He had the same appearance, the same head. When I saw him first appearing on the stage I was greatly surprised, I said to myself, he looks so like Beethoven, the very portrait of that great genius. And then he stood, the bow poised, one stroke and there were in it three or four notes only, but three or four supreme notes, full of power, greatness and grandeur; the entire hall was suffused with an atmosphere marvellous and unique. I could recognise very well the musical genius of Beethoven behind. It may be possible here too the soul of Beethoven in its entirety—the whole psychic being—was not present; the central psychic might have been elsewhere gathering more modest commonplace experiences, as a shoemaker, for example. But what was left and what manifested itself was something very characteristic of the great musician. He had disciplined his mental and vital being and even his physical being. in view of his musical capacity and this formation remained firm and sought to reincarnate. The musical being was originally organised and fashioned around the psychic consciousness and therefore it acquired its peculiar power and its force of persistence, almost an immortality. Such formations, though not themselves the psychic being, have a psychic quality, are independent beings, possess their own life and seek their fulfilment by manifesting and incarnating themselves whenever the occasion presents itself.

Can a Psychic Being take two bodies at the same time?

The matter is not so simple. I have told you often that the psychic being is the result of an evolution, that is to say, it is the expression of the divine consciousness that has entered and spread itself into Matter and slowly raises Matter and develops it so that it may return to the Divine. The psychic being is formed progressively by the divine centre through many lives or incarnations. There comes a time when it attains a kind of perfection, the perfection of its growth and formation. It has then often an aspiration towards greater realisation, a further progress to manifest better or further the Divine. As the result of this pull, it generally draws towards itself a being of a higher order, from a higher plane, from the Overmind, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, a being of involution who incarnates in the psychic being. These overmental entities are termed gods or divinities by men. Now when the fusion takes place, of a god into a psychic being, the latter naturally increases in stature and partakes of the nature of the god and acquires also the capacity to produce emanations; that is to say it throws out of itself a part which possesses an independent existence and can incarnate in others. In this way there may be not only two but several emanations or projections of the same original being. In other words, there may be a single psycho-divine origin but many personalities coming out of it. That is how it happens sometimes that different people feel a sort of affinity and

even identity, and with reason, because they carry within them the same deity, out of which they, that is, their psychic being came. It is not the same thing as the doubling of the personality where in throwing oneself out of oneself one loses a portion, as when you cut a body into two there are only two halves. Here the projection is a whole and independent personality. If you emanate a being out of you, you remain whole and entire without losing anything of yourself and the emanation too is a being whole and entire living its independent life.

II

What is the work of the Psychic? What is its function?

The Psychic is like the wire between the generator and the lamp. What is the generator and what is the lamp, or rather, who is the generator and who the lamp? The Divine is the generator and the body, the visible being is the lamp. The function then of the Psychic is to connect the two. In other words, if there were no Psychic in Matter, Matter could not come in direct contact with the Divine. All human beings, including yourself, all carry the Divine within you, you have only to enter within you to find Him. It is a unique speciality of the human being, rather of all embodied beings living upon earth. In the human being, the psychic becomes more conscious and formed; more conscious and therefore also

more free, it is individualised. You should note that it is a speciality of the earth alone. It is the direct infusion of a purifying and redeeming agent into the most obscure and unconscious Matter to waken it by degrees towards the divine consciousness, the divine presence, to the Divine Himself. It is the psychic presence that makes of man an exceptional being. Perhaps it is not good to tell it to him too often, for as it is he is already puffed up and thinks very highly of himself and there is no need to encourage him in that direction. Still it is a fact: so much so that beings from other worlds, worlds of what are known as demi-gods or even gods, beings from what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, are anxious to take a physical body upon earth so that they may experience the Psychic, as they do not possess it. These beings have very many qualities which men have not, but they lack this divine presence which is quite an exceptional thing belonging to the earth alone. All the inhabitants of the higher worlds—the Higher Mind, the Overmind and other domains—do not have the psychic being. Naturally, the beings of the vital worlds have not got it either. But these vital beings do not regret, for they do not want to have it. There are, however, a few exceptional beings on this level who wish to be converted and therefore desire a physical body; but the rest do not want, they are bound to the law of their being and cannot repudiate it.

So I say and we are bound to admit that it is an exceptional virtue in the human being to bear the psychic in

him. But to tell the truth, he does not seem to have profited much by it. He does not look like considering his virtue as something very desirable, from the manner he has been treating this presence. He prefers to it his mental ideals, he prefers to it his vital demands and he prefers to it his physical habits. I do not know how many of you have read the Bible. But there is a story that I used to like always. There were two brothers, Esau and Jacob. Esau had gone out hunting and felt tired and hungry. He came back home and found his brother preparing a dish. He asked Jacob to feed him. Jacob said he would give him food if he, Esau, sold his birthright to him. Esau said, of what use is the birthright to me now, and sold it to his brother. You understand the significance? You can of course take it quite in the superficial way. But I took it differently. The birthright is the right to be son of God. And Esau was quite ready to give up his divine right for a mess of pottage. It is an old story, but it is eternally true.

THE PSYCHIC BEING—SOME MYSTERIES

Does the psychic being progress always?

THERE are two kinds of progress in the psychic and they are very different. One consists in its formation and building and organisation; for the psychic begins by being only a little divine spark hidden in the inner person and out of this spark comes and gradually develops an independent conscious person who has his own will and activity. As I say, the psychic being is originally like a spark from the divine consciousness: it grows into a conscious individuality through the experiences of successive lives. This progress then is like the progress of the growing child. It is a thing in formation and it remains so for a long time in most human beings. It is not a fully individualised being there, not fully conscious and master of itself; it needs many births, one after another, to build itself and become fully conscious. In the end, however, there does come a time when it is a completed personality, fully individualised, fully conscious of itself and its destiny. When such a psychic being incarnates in a human being, it makes a great difference. For the man is born free, so to say, he is not bound to his circumstances, his surroundings or his origin or atavism, like ordinary people. When he comes upon earth, he feels he has a work to do in the world, he has a mission to fulfil. To that extent then his cycle of progress is completed, that is to say, he has no more need

to take birth in a body to make further progress. Till then rebirth is a necessity, it is compulsory; for it is through reincarnation—taking up a new body that he progresses, develops and grows. It is in the physical life and in the physical body that the soul slowly builds itself until it becomes a fully conscious being. But once it is fully formed, it is free either to take birth or not to at will. There then one kind of progress stops. But if the fully formed being now wishes to become an instrument for the work of the Divine, if he chooses to be a worker upon earth to help in the fulfilment of the cosmic purpose of the Divine, instead of going away and resting in the psychic bliss of his own world, then he has to make a new kind of progress, a progress towards capacity to work, to organise and execute the work to express and embody the will of the Divine. As long as the world continues, as long as he chooses to work for the Divine, he will continue to progress. But if he wishes to withdraw into the psychic world and gives up or refuses to work for the divine Plan, then he can remain in the static state beyond the range of progress. For, as I have said, progress exists only upon earth in the physical world. You cannot progress everywhere. In the psychic world there is a kind of blissful repose. You remain what and where you are without moving.

Everything upon earth progresses, has to progress. All men, without exception, even those who have no sense of the psychic, whether they wish or not, must progress. The psychic progresses in them in spite of themselves

and they have to follow the curve of its growth and development. That is to say, man ascends in the scale of life and grows, grows exactly as a child does. In the process of growth there comes a time when one reaches the summit and one changes the direction or the plane of progress. At the outset there is the purely physical progress, like that of the child; then there comes the mental progress, later on the psychic progress and the spiritual progress, so that unless progress changes its direction, when it has reached its limit on a particular level, one has to come down the curve, that is to say, instead of progression there will be retrogression, which means in the end disintegration and decomposition. Precisely because in the purely physical world there cannot be a perpetual and constant progress, there is in this domain this curve of growth, apogée, decline and decomposition. All that does not advance must recede. This is exactly what happens in the domain of matter. Matter does not know how to progress indefinitely, it has not learnt it; so after a time it is tired of progressing or growing. Given this constitution, one cannot go beyond a limit. But there is in man side by side with his physical growth, a vital growth and a mental growth as well. The mental especially can progress long after the body has ceased to progress. The body does not grow; even when it is declining, the mind still can continue to grow, to rise to higher heights. There is a mental ascension contrariwise to the physical descent. But they who do Yoga, who become conscious of their psychic being and are identified with it, who live with

its life, never cease to progress, they move upward till the last breath of their life; even when they die their progress does not stop. The body is on the decline, because it cannot keep step with the inner march forward, it cannot transform itself and mould itself into the rhythm of the inner consciousness. The discrepancy increases so much between the two, that there is a snap at the end and that is death. However, on the purely spiritual level too there is no progress. The domain of the pure spirit means a static condition; there is no progressive movement there, for it is beyond the field of progress, beyond all manifestation. For when you are merged in the Spirit, you have come out of creation and there is no question of progress, or even of any movement.

When the psychic is about to take rebirth does it choose its form beforehand?

It depends. As I have told you now, there are psychic beings that are just on the way of formation and growth, they usually cannot choose at the beginning, they cannot choose very much. But when they have come to a certain degree of development and consciousness, they make a choice; generally when they are still in the body, when they have gathered a certain amount of experience, they decide what is to be their next field of experience. I shall give you an illustration, although somewhat external. A psychic being, for example, needed the experience of power, authority, command and wanted to know the

reactions of these movements and also how to turn them towards the Divine, to learn, in a word, what these things can teach. So the soul took the body of a king (or a queen). When it had the necessary experience, learnt what it had to learn, it gave up the body, no longer useful. It is at that moment when it decides to leave the body but is still in the body that the soul makes the choice of the next experience. The choice very often takes a course of action and reaction. If the soul has experienced and studied a particular field, its choice falls upon a contrary field on the following occasion. Thus if the soul has had the experience of a kingly position and worked through that to enter into a conscious relation with the Divine, then at the moment of leaving the body that served with power and authority and command, it perhaps would say: "This time I shall take a middle position, neither high nor low, where there will be no need to lead mostly an external life, where one is neither in great luxury nor in great misery." With that resolution it returns to the psychic world for the necessary rest, for the assimilation of past experiences and preparation for the future. When the time comes for return upon earth, for the descent into a physical body, it remembers naturally the choice it made, but from that higher and subtler plane at that moment the material world is not seen in the way we do, it appears in a different form; still one can notice the differences in the surroundings and activities. One has not the vision of the details, but a total or global vision is there. It can choose an atmosphere, it can choose even a particular country. It has in

view a certain kind of education, civilisation and influence, the kind of life that it wishes to lead. Then as it comes down and looks about, it distinguishes very clearly the different kinds of vibrations and makes its way accordingly. It aims, as it were, at the place where to drop. But it can hit the target only approximatively. For there are one or two other factors besides which come into play. For there is not only its own choice, from above, there must also be a receptivity from below, an aspiration that draws to it the particular being or the particular type of being. Usually the call is from a mother, sometimes from both the parents. If the parent has some aspiration or receptivity, something that is sufficiently passive and open and looking up towards something higher, in that case, the thing appears to the psychic being as a luminous vibration which beckons it. It is the answer to its will. It shows the place it is to go to. It cannot fix the day of its birth. There will naturally be a period of uncertainty, but that is not expected to go beyond a year. The second factor that somewhat modifies or qualifies his choice comes from the nature of the birth itself. The soul, the conscious being, precipitates into the inconscience, for the physical world, even human consciousness, at its very best, is an inconscient thing when compared to the psychic consciousness. It is as though the soul fell head downmost. That makes it dazed and for a long time it does not know what is what. It does not know where it is, what it is doing nor why it is there; a complete blank possesses it. It is unable to express itself, especially, as a baby, it has

not the proper amount of brain to understand or manifest anything. Very rarely do children show the exceptional being that they have within them. Cases do occur indeed, but they are very few and far between. Generally it takes time for the soul to come to its own. It wakes up but slowly from its numbness, it is only gradually that it begins to understand that it is there for some reason and by choice. This oblivion is occasioned by the presence of the mind and mental education which completely shuts off the psychic consciousness. All kinds of circumstances, happenings, experiences—external and emotional—are then needed to strike open the doors within, to bring the memory that one comes from elsewhere and for a very special reason. It is the normal longer process. But one may have the chance of meeting early enough someone who knows; then instead of groping and fumbling through ignorance and darkness, you get the light and the help that give you the swift and straight contact.

The psychic will and psychic development are things that are completely outside the range of common notions. Ideas of justice and reward and punishment have no place here at all. Many people come to me and complain: "What have I done in my past life that I have to be under such difficult conditions now, to suffer so much!" I always reply: "But don't you see it is a blessing for you, the divine grace upon you? In your past life perhaps you yourself asked for such conditions so that you may make greater progress through them!" This way of looking at the thing may seem very new. But truth lies that way.

How is it possible for a psychic being once living the life of intelligence and creativity to enter again into a life of stupidity and ordinariness?

I did not say quite like that. The psychic being is not stupid. What happens may be described in this way: for example, suppose the psychic being has had the experience of the life of a writer. The function of the writer is to express himself, his perceptions and observations and judgments in words: he has a certain field, a certain range of associations and circumstances in which to live and move. But there are other fields and ranges beyond and outside of which he has no experience. So he may say to himself: I have lived with my head, I know something of the intellectual reactions to life: now let me live with my heart and experience the reactions of feeling and passion. Indeed, sometimes an overactivity of the intellect impoverishes the capacities of the heart. So the psychic being, in order to have this new kind of experience, abandons his intellectual heights, so to say, and comes down to the vital plane. He is no longer a creative genius, but an ordinary man, but with a heart enriched or enriching itself with its intense or generous movements. (One can remember in this connection the story of Shankaracharya who being a Sannyasi from boyhood has had no experience of love; he entered the body of a king in order to gather this experience.) It is not rare to see psychic beings that have reached the maximum of their growth in certain directions, take up a very modest and ordinary life in some other new

direction or for some other purpose. One who was a king, for example, as I already narrated once, who has had the experiences of power and authority and domination, the imperial heights, may choose to descend to ordinary life, to work as an obscure person without being troubled by the pomps of high position; he may choose very bourgeois surroundings, very mediocre conditions among mediocre men and things, to procure, so to say, a kind of incognito so that he may work in peace and quiet. Can you say it is a decline and a fall? It is only facing life, meeting its problems from another angle, another point of view. You must know, for consciousness, the true consciousness —the consciousness of the psychic—glory and obscurity are the same, success and failure are the same. What is important is the growth of consciousness. Certain conditions which to your human eye appear favourable, may in reality be quite unfavourable for the growth of consciousness. With your ordinary thoughts and your ordinary reactions you judge everything according to success and failure. But that is the very last way of judging, for it is the most artificial, most superficial and absolutely contrary to truth. In human life, as it is organised at present, it is perhaps only once in a million cases, or even less than that, that truth is given the first place; always there is an element of show mixed up. When a man has success, much success, you may be sure there is mixed up with it as much show.

PAST LIVES AND THE PSYCHIC BEING

MOST people are not at all conscious of what is happening in them. Their consciousness or being is a mixture of mental, vital and physical elements, a kind of hotchpotch. There are a few, very few indeed, who are conscious—conscious of what is beyond the three, viz. their psychic being. For it is only that element which endures, continues through successive lives. Certain people have known or learnt some rudiments of the matter—who believe in rebirth, but conceive it in the most childish manner. Their idea is as if the person changed his body like a robe. There are persons even who have written books describing seriously all the lives they passed through since the time they were monkeys! As I have said, it is the psychic element alone that persists after death, all the rest gets dissolved. And in 999 cases out of 1,000, the psychic is a very small formation lying behind and taking little part in the actual life of the person. I speak of the average man, not of the Yogi, that is to say, one who has a developed psychic being to the extent that it is capable of controlling and guiding the outer life. How often does an ordinary man get in contact with his psychic being! Years and years pass for many or most to have just a passing taste of this movement. It is this moment that abides and is carried over to the next life, all other things are simply effaced. At

a given point of our life, there comes a special circumstance, there is a call within, an absolute inner necessity that brings forward the psychic and the contact is made perhaps for an instant. That experience is preserved in the psychic memory. More than the outer circumstances and the physical events, however, what is cherished in the consciousness is the intimate emotion, the vibration that accompanied the perception at the time. At the most, a word said, a phrase heard, just a passing scene is all that is stored, net and clear, engraved as it were. But above all it is the soul's state that is the most important thing. It is these scattered elements that serve as stepping-stones or signposts on the soul's forward journey. They are the constants that build up the personality of a man. On rare occasions there is a larger clearing, the circumstances preserved are sufficiently definite to point to a date and a historical person. Usually, however, one cannot say, "I was such a person, I lived in such a country or did such things." These psychic flashes, more in some cases, less in others, are the only genuine and authentic records of the story of a person's lives.

It is a being who is completely identified with his psychic, who has organised his whole person, in all its parts, around this centre, in fact, a being of one piece, entirely and solely turned to the Divine that can alone remember or hold in his consciousness something like a totality of his personal history. For in his case even when the body drops, the other parts being integrated and taken up into the soul substance maintain their

individual existence; the personality formed around the psychic continues with its memory intact: even it can pass from one life to another without losing the consciousness.

A psychic memory has a very definite character; it has a wonderful intensity. It stores the unforgettable moments of life, those when the consciousness was most luminous, most powerful, most active. They are the happiest and the most fortunate moments of life. But they cannot be spoken about.

There are people who say and perhaps believe too that they were such and such persons and even give a detailed description of their past lives. There are also the well-known spirit communications through a medium at *spirit sittings*. Someone comes and tells you he was Napoleon, another was Shakespeare and so on. How many Shakespeares and Napoleons and Caesars have manifested in this way, there is no counting! There are spirits who are extremely talkative and bewitch you with extraordinary stories, many that seem so true and genuine on the face, many others, of course, full of the grossest self-contradictions. The fact, however, is that usually these spirits are small beings of the vital, often remnants of a dead person, broken bits of his decomposed personality, desires that have persisted, coagulated imaginations set free that move about and seek to possess and settle upon a living person. The small spirits of the vital are often not of good disposition; they amuse themselves at the cost of the gullible human being, making a fool of

him. In that world it is easy to read the mind of others: the spirit sees clearly what is there in your head even if you do not speak it out. That is how it reveals secrets known to you alone, even secrets you have totally forgotten. They can imitate other personalities. They know many other small tricks to confuse or astound you.

THE HOMOGENEOUS BEING

A THING is homogeneous when all its parts are similar, are *like itself*; in other words, when the whole being is under the same influence, moved by the same consciousness, the same impulsion, the same will. Normally a man is formed of many kinds of fragments, all disparate, each becoming active in its turn at different moments. A part may become active, so different from the previous one, that the man seems altogether a new person. Each element in us has its own nature and activity, demands its own fulfilment, acts almost as an independent personality. We are composed indeed of multiple personalities.

Thus, for example, you are now in a very good state of consciousness. You have the feeling that you really live for an ideal, for the Divine and are happy. Suddenly something happens; you meet someone, not very desirable, or you do something, not commendable, or you are in the midst of some untoward circumstances and you find you have lost your experience, so much so that you may even lose the memory of it. You wonder how this could have happened. A submerged part of your being has come up, an element that lay aside is now in front: it has come overshadowing or pushing the other into the background.

There are many examples of such double, triple, quadruple or multiple personality. The separate personalities are not conscious of each other, each acts independently

and goes its own way. They live together, but do not mix or mingle with each other; they are contained in the same body, that is the only connection. It is like a sack in which pebbles and pearls—if they are indeed real pearls —have been thrown together and the only bond of union is the sack. This is not homogeneity; this is called heterogeneity.

I knew a person who had a will, a clarity of thought and ideas, who prepared intelligently all that needed to be done with regard to a particular work. All on a sudden there was a reversal of the whole being. Another person surged up who not only did not continue the work of his predecessor, but undid it all. He destroyed in 10 minutes what took months for the other to build up. And you can understand the dismay of the first person when he came back and saw the havoc done: he had to start over again.

What then one should do? What is the remedy?

You have to find out in you a seat of consciousness, a signpost firmly planted, deep inside, which is at the same time a mirror. All things, all happenings must pass in front of the mirror; they will be reflected there in their true nature, exactly as they are in their truth and not as they appear or pretend to be. And according to their nature and quality you are to give them places around; the signpost will show where each has to go for its place. The Mirror will judge and test each sentiment, each impulse, each sensation that comes up. If it is pleasant, if it is luminous, if it is what it should be, give it a place near the centre. If, on the other hand, it is grey, obscure,

doubtful, put it away, farther off. If, by chance, any of the unpleasant elements has forced its way up and occupied a near seat, you must warn it sternly and remove it, give it its appropriate seat; when it has recognised itself, changed itself, then only it can be allowed within a nearer ring. It is in this way that you should arrange and group all the elements of your being, according to the value and quality of each one around the central consciousness. That is how you organise your being. You build up a pattern of concentric rings, the nearer the ring to the centre, the purer must be the elements that compose it and therefore of greater value and significance. If you can arrange in this way all the parts and parcels of your being around the psychic centre, each in its own place according to its role and function and all turned towards the central consciousness and inspired and moved by it and there is no element which sounds a differing note, then you have the perfect homogeneity of your nature.

It is a very interesting exercise in which you can engage yourself. If you take it up and follow regularly and assiduously, you will amuse yourself immensely and with profit. Time will never hang heavy, it will bear golden fruits. At the end, say of two or three years, you will see, if you look back, how much you have changed, you wonder how you could have thought or acted as you did. You find yourself a considerably changed personality. You can start the experiment from today itself and see how life becomes more and more amusing, interesting and significant.

SERVICE HUMAN AND DIVINE

To wish to serve humanity, to do good to it shows ambition and egoism? How?

Why do you wish to serve humanity? What is your purpose? What is your motive? Do you know in what consists the good to humanity? And do you know better than humanity itself what is good for it? Or do you know it better than the Divine? You say the Divine is everywhere, so if you serve humanity, it is the Divine whom you serve. Well, if the Divine is everywhere, he is in you too; so the best and the most logical thing should be to begin by serving yourself.

Is there then no need for service to humanity? Hospitals, nursing organisations, charitable institutions have not been useful to humanity? Has not the spirit of philanthropy mended and improved the conditions of human life?

Has it, I ask? You have tried to help a few people here and there. But what does it amount to compared to what needs to be done? The proverbial drop in the ocean or less than that even. You remember the story of St. Vincent de Paul? He began giving alms to the poor. On the first day there were ten, on the second some twenty, on the third more than fifty and the number went on swelling in more than geometrical progression. And then? Colbert, the King's Minister, remarked seeing the plight of the

saint: "Our brother seems to be giving birth endlessly to his poor people".

I do not think that the spirit of charity has in any way improved human conditions. I do not see that men have become either more or less subject to disease and indigence than before. Charity was always there and misery has coexisted with it ever. I do not think the ratio between the two has diminished in any way. You remember the ironical but pertinent remark of someone who said in view of science's attempts to cure and remove misery: "Poor philanthropists would be in a sad plight, their occupation will go!" The true reason why one wishes to do charity is elsewhere, it is to please oneself, it is for self-satisfaction. It amuses you to do the thing: it gives you the sense that you are doing something, that you are a valuable member of humanity, not like the others, that you are somebody. What else all that is except that you are vain, full of self-importance, full of yourself? That is what I meant when I said that it is ambition or egoism that makes you humanitarian. Of course, if it pleases you to do the work, if you feel happy in doing it, you are at perfect liberty to do the work and continue. But do not imagine that you are doing any real or effective service to humanity; particularly do not imagine that by that you are serving God, leading a spiritual life or doing Yoga.

Just an illustration of the quality of the spirit that animates humanitarianism. A charitable man will give generously for a thing that is known, recognised, appreciated;

he will be liberal if he finds his name attached to the work, announced and pronounced, if there is fame for him in it. But ask him a dole for something genuine, comparatively modest or out of the way, something that is truly spiritual and divine, you will find his purse-strings tightened, his heart closed up. A gift that bears no value to the giver does not tempt the ordinary humanitarian. There is indeed another different category of givers, of the opposite kind, who want precisely to remain anonymous: they would be displeased if their name were announced. But the motive here too is not very different; in fact it is the same motive acting *à rebours*, backward as it were. Here there is the additional element of self-glorification: one gives and people do not know who, it is something all the more to be proud of.

You must look into yourself, question yourself before you do a thing simply because it is the thing normally done and it is how things are normally done. You can do good to others, if you know what is that good and if you possess that in yourself. If you wish to help others, you must be on a higher level than theirs. If you are one with the others, level with them in nature and consciousness, what can you do but share in their ignorance and blind movements and perpetuate them? So it happens really that the first thing to do is to serve yourself.

You will make a remarkable discovery as you proceed to know what you are and who you are. That is how you should begin. "I want to serve humanity. How can I serve? Who is this 'I' that wants to serve?" You say,

"I am such a person, this form and this name." But the form you have now was not there when you were a baby: it has been changing constantly. All the elements of your body are being renewed totally. Neither are your sensations and feelings those you had a few years ago. Your thoughts and ideas have moved through revolutions. The "I" covers a sum of everchanging factors. There is nothing particularly to be called "I": it is only a ring of changes. An empty name seems to be the only constant thing. One element at a time comes forward—an idea, a feeling, an impulse—and that is your "I" for the moment. At another moment another element comes up and becomes your "I". You are not one "I" but a crowd of many "I"s. So what is the value of the declaration of one of the I's that it has found the goal, the truth, the duty you have to follow? Thus if you proceed further, questioning and analysing yourself thoroughly and sincerely, you will stumble upon the reality. You will find that "I" does not exist at all. What exists is something else: it is the one indivisible reality, the Divine alone.

It is this self-discovery that will give you the basic knowledge, the foundation of your life, the discovery that your self as yourself does not exist, you are indeed nothing. This sense of nothingness must pervade your being, fill all the elements of your being before the truth can dawn upon you and the Divine Presence can be felt. And what you have been doing all along is the very contrary thing, asserting your egoism, your vanity—pretending that you were somebody, you could do some-

thing, that the world needed your help and you can give that help. Nothing of the kind. When you discover this truth and accept it, when you are humbled and in true humility you approach life and reality, you will find your real career and vocation.

In a deeper sense it is indeed by serving yourself that you serve others best. When you discover a dark spot in you, a grain of egoism, ambition, selfishness, when you do not yield to its impulsion but surmount it, when you thus conquer in your self a movement that leads you astray, in the same gesture you make the conquest for the sake of others too, you create the same possibility in others. There can be nothing more dynamic than this setting of personal example. It is not that others observe you and imitate you; the influence is more subtle and more powerful. You create the opportunity, make an opening, bring into active play the force of your realisation, even without the knowledge of others; the others are only benefited by the invisible help that is lent to them. But you must be on your guard here too. You must not say, "I will help others, so let me improve myself." There should not be any such spirit of barter or bargain. Confine yourself to your own business; how others are affected or not affected is not your concern. If you entertain that kind of idea, you invite the same vanity and egoism, by the backdoor. Yours should be like the blooming of a flower; it blooms out of its own joy and delight of self-fulfilment; in the process, by its very existence it spreads its perfume all around, fills the

surrounding with its glad vibration, but that simply happens, it does not do all that purposely or intentionally. Even so the soul that perfects himself: the victory he wins for himself is contagious and extends automatically.

I have said your ego is an illusion. Your "I" does not exist at all. There is nothing like separate, distinct individualities and individual fulfilments. The Divine alone exists and the Divine's Will. He is the single and unique and all-embracing reality. What then is the source of this variety and diversity of existence? What is the significance, if any, of the many individualities and personalities, their appearance and play on the world-stage?

That is another story. I leave it for a future occasion.

THE DIVINE FAMILY

WHEN people, far separated from one another, belonging to different parts of the world or pursuing most diverse professions, meet and gather and work for a common purpose, it means that they are kindred souls and have met together and worked together before in other lives. They felt they belonged to the same family and resolved to act together and collaborate in a common endeavour for a common ideal. Indeed, the souls, in their psychic reality, are grouped in big families, as it were; they come down in groups again and again to take up and continue the work they are engaged in till it is complete.

At a given moment, when the time is ripe, they are called up. The souls are like children asleep, in the peace and repose of the psychic world, awaiting the urge or order for another birth. As soon as the order is given, they wake up and rush down towards the earth. When they drop thus into the earth's atmosphere, they are no longer together, they are scattered about all over the earth. One does not know even where one drops. Also once under the material conditions and circumstances here below, things take a very different aspect. For, the inner impulse, the original purpose gets veiled; the psychic forgets itself and is now surrounded and hedged in by forces, things and persons perhaps quite foreign and contradictory to its nature. Now comes the

labour of the soul, to find itself, to look about for the lost end of the thread. The inner urge must be strong enough, the original will categorical enough for the being to surmount all obstacles, pass through all vicissitudes, work through all the windings of a labyrinthine journey and finally arrive. Some perhaps do not arrive at all in a particular life or arrive only to stop at a distance: others arrive not in a straight line, but, as I have said, after a tortuous and round-about wandering. In other words, in their external mind and impulsion, they look for other things, they are interested in objects that are far other than the soul's interest—like the person who enquired of Yoga, as she thought a Yogi could give her back her spoilt beauty. And yet the soul makes use of such trivial or absurd means to turn the man towards itself, guide him gradually to the place or the family to which he really belongs.

The material world is full of things that draw you away from your soul's quest, from approaching your home. Normally you are tossed about by the forces of ignorant Nature and you are driven even to do the utmost stupidities. There is but one solution, to find your psychic being; and once you have found it, cling to it desperately and not to allow yourself to be drawn out by any temptation, any other impulsion whatsoever.

Section Six

THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF ART

TRUE art means the expression of beauty in the material world. In a world wholly converted, that is to say, expressing integrally the divine reality, art must serve as the revealer and teacher of this divine beauty in life. In other words, the artist must be able to enter into communion with the Divine and receive the inspiration as to what should be the form or forms for the material realisation of the divine beauty. At the same time, in expressing true beauty in the physical, he also sets an example, becomes an instrument of education. Art not only creates beauty, but educates the taste of people to find true beauty, the essential beauty that expresses the divine truth. That is the true role of art. But between that and what it is now there is a great difference.

The decline comes in the normal course of evolution which follows a spiral movement. From the beginning of the last century to the middle of it, art became totally a debased thing, commercial, obscure, ignorant, something very far from its true nature and function. But the spirit of art cannot die; only as it rose as a movement of protest or revolt, the forms it chose were equally bad. In attempting to counteract the general debasing of taste it went to the other extreme, as is the character of all movement of nature. One was a servile copy of nature, it was pointed out or not even that. In those days it used

to be called photographic art, if one were to abuse it. But now it is no longer a term of abuse, for photography has developed into a consummate art. Neither could it be truly called realism, for there are realistic paintings which belong to a very high order. That art was conventional, artificial, lifeless. Now the reaction to this movement said: we do not concern ourselves with physical life any more, the reality as we see with outward eyes is no longer our business; we want instead to express the vital life, the mental life. Hence came a whole host of reformers and rebels—cubists, surrealists, futurists and so on—who sought to create art with their head. They forgot the simple truth that in art it is not the head that commands, but the feeling of beauty in the heart. So art landed into the most absurd, ridiculous and frightful of worlds. Indeed with the two wars behind us we have gone further in that direction. Each war has brought down a world in decomposition. And now we seem to be in the very heart of chaos.

Perhaps we are at the bottom of the curve and it is time to mount up. This disintegration is a necessary prelude; it is even from a certain point of view a better condition than that of the epoch of Queen Victoria or the Second Empire in France, the age of the practical successful bourgeoisie, of snug contentment and dull mediocrity, of death in life. As I say, the movement of progress follows a curve. In a certain epoch some fine things are expressed in a fine way. Then follows an epoch which is tired of the old things, wants to find new things and

express in a new way. The age of Louis XIV, for example, was an age dominated by the sense of artistic creation and it represented the peak of a certain type of the truly beautiful in art and life. In the course of social evolution other ideas, other needs appeared—those of a commercial age. So the curve took a downward course. For there is nothing so antagonistic to art as commerce. For the association of commerce with art means the popularisation of something which is exceptional: it is putting within the reach of all and sundry a thing which is understood and appreciated only by the chosen few, the élite. Perhaps it is because of this, because art has no outlet in the world, it has in these days turned to other directions, into the domains of the mental and the vital, into sideways and bypaths of consciousness. When, however, better conditions prevail, when instead of the spirit of mercantilism, there appears upon earth the sense of a more beautiful reality, then art will be reborn and come to its own. That seems to be still a long way off.

The art of this decadent epoch is what I call mushroom art. You know how mushrooms grow? They grow anywhere and do not seem to form part, for example, of what you cultivate or where you cultivate. Just think of it! There is a spot on the wall which becomes humid and you see it soon covered with this growth. You have a tree which does not get the sunlight, you will find its roots covered with mushrooms. It is a kind of spontaneous growth which is not linked to the spot where it

grows. It is not a limb of its environment, but something extraneous added to it. Instead of mushrooms, I could have spoken of parasites: they belong to the same category. You have seen parasite plants? They grow upon trees, they fix themselves there. They have not their own life and organs, they do not draw their food directly from earth, as all normal plants do; they live upon the life of another, make use of the labour of another. There are also animal parasites that live upon another animal, growing and profiting by its labour. Parasites or mushrooms have no raison d'être to be where they are—they are invaders, interpolators, anomalies.

In ancient times, in the great ages, in Greece, for example or even during the Italian Renaissance, particularly, however, in Greece and in Egypt, they erected buildings, constructed monuments for the sake of public utility. Their buildings were meant for the most part to be temples, sanctuaries to lodge their gods and deities. What they had in view was something total, whole and entire, beautiful and complete in itself. That was the purpose of architecture embodying the harmony of sweeping and majestic lines: sculpture was a part of architecture supplying details of expression and even painting came up to complete the expression: but the whole held together in a coordinated unity which was the monument itself. The sculpture was for the monument, the painting was for the monument; it was not that each was separate from the other and existed for itself and one did not know why it was there. In India, when a temple was

being built, for example, what was aimed at was a total creation, all the parts combined to give effect to one end, to make a beautiful vesture for God, the one object of their adoration. All the great epochs of art were of this kind. But in modern times, in the latter part of the last century, Art became a matter of business. A painting was done in order to be sold. You do your paintings, put each one in a frame and place them side by side or group them, that is, lump them together without much reason. The same with regard to sculpture. You do a statue and set it up anywhere without any connection whatsoever with the surrounding. It is always something foreign, extraneous in its setting, like a mushroom or a parasite. The thing in itself may not be quite ugly, but it is out of place, it is not part of an organic whole. We exhibit art today. Indeed, it is exhibitionism, it is the showing off of cleverness, talent, skill, virtuosity. A piece of architecture does not incarnate a living force as it used to do once upon a time. It is no longer the expression of an aspiration, of something that lifts up the spirit nor the expression of the magnificence of the Divine whose dwelling it is meant to be. You build houses here and there, pell-mell or somehow juxtaposed without any coordinating idea governing them, without any relation to the environment where they are situated. When you enter a house, it is the same thing. A bit of painting here, a bit of sculpture there, some *objects of art* in one corner, a few others in another. Yes, it is an exhibition, a museum, a kaleido-

scopic collection. It gives a shock to the truly sensitive artistic taste.

I do not say that a museum is not necessary or useful. It is a good means of education, that is to say, getting information about what other people or other epochs did. It is an aid to the historical knowledge of things. But it is far from being artistic. A museum is not the place where art can find its highest or its true expression. There is an art which seeks to coordinate, integrate distinct, discrete, contrary objects. It is called decorative art. And in so far as this art is successful, we are a step forward even in these days towards true art.

Here in India things are and should be a little different. In spite of the modern European invasion and in spite of certain lapses in some directions—I may refer to what Sri Aurobindo calls the Ravi Varma interlude—the heart of India is not anglicised or Europeanised. The Calcutta School is a sign—although their attempt is rather on a small scale—yet it is a sign that India's artistic taste, in spite of a modern education, still turns to what is essential and permanent in her culture and civilisation. You have still before you, within your reach, the old temples, the old paintings, to teach you that art creation is meant to express a faith, to give you the sense of totality and organisation. You will note in this connection another fact which is very significant. All these paintings, all these sculptures in caves and temples bear no signature. They were not done with the idea of making a name. Today you fix your name to every bit of work you do,

announce the event with a great noise in the papers, so that the thing may not be forgotten. In those days the artist did what he had to do, without caring whether posterity would remember his name or not. The work was done in an urge of aspiration towards expressing a higher beauty, above all with the idea of preparing a dwelling fit for the deity whom one invokes. In Europe in the cathedrals of the Middle Age, things were done in the same spirit. There too at that time works were anonymous and bore no signature of the author. If any name came to be preserved, it was more or less by accident.

However, even the commercialism of today, hideous as it is, has an advantage of its own. Commercialism means the mixing together of all parts of the world. It effaces the distinction between Orient and Occident, brings the Orient near to the Occident and the Occident near to the Orient. With the exchange of goods, there happens an exchange of ideas and even of habits and manners. In ancient days Rome conquered Greece and through that conquest was herself conquered by the Culture and Civilisation of Greece. The thing is happening today on a much greater scale and more intensely perhaps. At one time Japan was educating herself on the American pattern; now that America has conquered Japan physically, she is being conquered by the spirit of Japan; even in objects manufactured in America, you notice the Japanese influence in some way or other.

MUSIC—ITS ORIGIN AND NATURE

MUSIC, you must remember, like any other art, is a means for expressing something—some idea, some feeling, some emotion, a certain aspiration and so on. There is even a domain where all these movements exist and from where they are brought down under a musical form. A good composer with some inspiration would produce good music; he is then called a good musician. A bad musician can have also a good inspiration, he can receive something from the higher domain, but possessing no musical capacity, he would produce only what is very commonplace, very ordinary and uninteresting. However, if you go beyond, precisely over to this place where lies the origin of music, get to the idea, the emotion, the inspiration behind, you can then taste of these things without being stopped by the form. Still this musical form can be joined on to what is behind or beyond the form; for it is that which originally inspired the musician to compose. Of course, there are instances where no inspiration exists, where the source is only a kind of sound mechanics, which is not, in any case, always interesting. What I mean is this that there is an inner state in which the outer form is not the most important thing: there lies the origin of music, the inspiration that is beyond. It is trite to say, but one often forgets that it is not sound that makes music, the sound has to express something.

There is a music that is quite mechanical and has no inspiration. There are musicians who play with great virtuosity, that is to say, they have mastered the technique and execute faultlessly the most complicated and rapid movements. It is music perhaps, but it expresses nothing; it is like a machine. It is clever, there is much skill, but it is uninteresting, soulless. The most important thing, not only in music, but in all human creations, in all that man does even, is, I repeat, the inspiration behind. The execution naturally is expected to be on a par with the inspiration; but to express truly well, one must have truly great things to express. It is not to say that technique is not necessary; on the contrary, one must possess a very good technique; it is even indispensable. Only it is not the one thing indispensable, nor is it as important as the inspiration. For the essential quality of music comes from the region where it has its source.

Source or origin means the thing without which an object would not exist. Nothing can manifest upon earth physically unless it has its source in a higher truth. Thus material existence has its source and inspiration in the vital, the vital in its turn has behind it the mental, the mental has the overmental and so on. If the universe were a flat object, having its origin in itself, it would quickly cease to exist. (That is perhaps what Science means when it postulates the impossibility of perpetual motion). It is because there is a higher source which inspires it, a secret energy that drives it towards manifes-

tation that Life continues: otherwise it would exhaust itself very soon.

There is a graded scale in the source of music. A whole category of music is there that comes from the higher vital, for example: it is very catching, perhaps even a little vulgar, something that twines round your nerves, as it were, and twists them. It catches you somewhere about your loins—navel centre—and charms you in its way. As there is a vital music there is also what can be called psychic music coming from quite a different source; there is further a music which has spiritual origin. In its own region this higher music is very magnificent; it seizes you deeply and carries you away somewhere else. But if you were to express it perfectly—execute it—you would have to pass this music too through the vital. Your music coming from high may nevertheless fall absolutely flat in the execution, if you do not have that intensity of vital vibration which alone can give it its power and splendour. I knew people who had very high inspiration, but their music turned to be quite commonplace, because their vital did not move. Their spiritual practice put their vital almost completely to sleep; yes, it was literally asleep and did not work at all. Their music thus came straight into the physical. If you could get behind and catch the source, you would see that there was really something marvellous even there, although externally it was not forceful or effective. What came out was a poor little melody, very thin, having nothing of the power of harmony which is there when one can bring into play the vital energy. If

one could put all this power of vibration that belongs to the vital into the music of higher origin we would have the music of a genius. Indeed, for music and for all artistic creation, in fact, for literature, for poetry, for painting etc. an intermediary is needed. Whatever one does in these domains depends doubtless for its intrinsic value upon the source of the inspiration, upon the plane or the height where one stands. But the value of the execution depends upon the strength of the vital that expresses the inspiration. For a complete genius both are necessary. The combination is rare, generally it is the one or the other, more often it is the vital that predominates and overshadows.

When the vital only is there, you have the music of *café concert* and cinema. It is extraordinarily clever and at the same time extraordinarily commonplace, even vulgar. Since, however, it is so clever, it catches hold of your brain, haunts your memory, rings in (or wrings) your nerves; it becomes so difficult to get rid of its influence, precisely because it is done so well, so cleverly. It is made vitally with vital vibrations, but what is behind is not, to say the least, wholesome. Now imagine the same vital power of expression joined to the inspiration coming from above, say, the highest possible inspiration when the entire heaven seems to open out, then it is music indeed! Some things in César Franck, some in Beethoven, some in Bach, some in some others possess this sovereignty. But after all it is only a moment, it comes for a moment and does not abide. There is no artist whose whole work is executed at such a pitch. The inspiration

comes like a flash of lightning, most often it lasts just long enough to be grasped and held in a few snatches.

Something similar to that experience may happen to you when your consciousness is all attentive and concentrated; you feel suddenly that you are being carried aloft, that all your energies are gathered and lifted up, as if your head has opened out and you are thrown into the free air, into the far spaces of extraordinary heights and magnificent lights. The experience gives you in a few seconds what one may in the normal course of things achieve after many years of difficult yoga. Only immediately after the experience you drop down below upon the earth, because the basis has not been built; even you may begin to doubt whether you had really the experience. Still the consciousness has been prepared, something definitive has been done and remains.

INDIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSIC

THE difference is both in regard to the source and the expression and in an inverse way. In European music a very high—spiritual—inspiration is a rare thing. The psychic source also is very rare. But if at all it is a very high spiritual source or otherwise it is the vital that is the source. The expression is always there, apart from some exceptions naturally; but it is almost always vital, because the source is very often purely vital. At times, as I said, it comes from high above, then it is really marvellous. At times, more rarely, it is psychic: something of it was in the religious music, but it is not frequent. Indian music, on the other hand, almost always, that is to say, when we have good musicians, has a psychic source, the source, for example, of the Ragas. It does not come from the top heights, it has rather an inner and intimate origin. But it has very rarely a sufficient vital body. I have heard a good deal of Indian music, quite a good deal indeed. I came across very rarely any that has a great vital force, not more than four or five times. But I have heard oftener that with a psychic inspiration behind. It is a music directly translated from the inner into the physical. To listen you must concentrate, as it is something very thin, very fine and tenuous, having nothing of the vital vibration with its strong intense resonances. You can glide into it, let yourself be carried along the flow, entering the psychic

source. It has that effect, it acts something like an intoxication, something that takes you into a kind of trance. If you listen well and are attentive and let yourself go, you slowly glide and dip, dip into the psychic consciousness; but if you remain in the external consciousness, such a thin stream expresses itself there that the vital gives no response and finds it extremely flat and monotonous. If, however, along with the psychic vibration there were also a vital force expressing it, the result would be interesting indeed.

I like this kind of music, with a theme, a single theme moving and developing gradually with variations: countless variations playing out the same constant theme, variations branching out and coming back again to the original basic theme. In Europe too there was something of the kind in its otherwise very different style. Bach had it, Mozart too. In modern times some musicians like Debussy, Raval and the Russian Borodine and a few others have caught something of it. You take a certain number of notes, in a certain relation and upon that scheme you play variations, almost an infinite number of variations. It is marvellous: it takes you deep inside and, if you are ready, gives you the consciousness of the psychic, something that draws you back from the external physical consciousness and connects you with something otherwhere within.

SPECIALISATION

You must extend, enlarge, enrich your mind. It must be full of thoughts and ideas. It must be stored with the results of your observation and study. It must not be a "poor mind", a mind, that is to say, that has not many ideas nor the capacity of reasoning and argument. Your mind must be capable of thinking of many different things, gathering knowledge of different kinds, considering a problem from many different sides, not following only a single line or track: it must be somewhat like a Japanese fan opening out full circle in all directions.

You have, for example, several subjects to learn at school. Well, learn as many as possible. If you read at home, read as many varieties as possible. I know you are usually asked and advised to follow a different way. You are to take as few subjects as possible and *specialise*. Yes, that is the general ideal: *specialisation*, to be an expert in one thing. If you wish to be a good philosopher, do philosophy only; if you wish to be a good chemist, do only chemistry; and even you should concentrate upon only one problem or thesis in philosophy or chemistry. In sports you are asked to do the same. Choose one item and fix your attention upon that alone. If you want to be a good tennis player, think of tennis alone. However, I am not of that opinion. My experience is different. I believe, there are general faculties in man which he should acquire

and cultivate more than specialise himself. Of course, if it is your ambition to be a Monsieur or Madame Curie who wanted to discover one particular thing, to find out a new mystery of a definite kind, then you have to concentrate upon the one thing in view. But even then, once the object is gained, you can turn very well to other things. Besides, it is not an impossibility in the midst of the one-pointed pursuit to find occasions and opportunities to be interested in other pursuits.

From my childhood I have been hearing of the same lesson; I am afraid it was taught also in the days of our fathers and grandfathers and great grandfathers, namely, that if you wish to be successful in something you must do that only and nothing else. I was rebuked very much because I was busy with many different things at the same time. I was told I would be in the end good for nothing. I was studying, I was painting, I was doing music and many other things. I was repeatedly warned that my painting would be worthless, my music would be worthless, my studies would be incomplete and defective if I had my way. Perhaps it was true; but I found my way had its advantages also—precisely the advantages I was speaking of at the outset, namely, it widens and enriches the mind and consciousness, makes it supple and flexible, gives it a spontaneous power to understand and handle anything new presented to it. If, however, I had wanted to become an executant of the first order and play in concerts, then of course I would have had to restrict myself. Or in painting if my aim was to be one of the great

artists of the age, I could have done only that and nothing else. One understands the position very well, but it is only a point of view. I do not see why I should become the greatest musician or the greatest painter. It seems to me to be nothing but vanity.

But it is a very natural and spontaneous movement in man to change from one work to another in order to maintain a kind of balance. Change also means rest. We have often heard of great artists or scholars seeking for rest and having great need of it. They find it by changing their activity. For example, Ingres was a painter; painting was his normal and major occupation. But whenever he found time he took up his violin. Curiously, it was his violin which interested him more than his painting. He was not very good at music, but he took great pleasure in it. He was sufficiently good at painting, but it interested him less. But the real thing is that he needed a stable poise or balance. Concentration upon a single thing is very necessary, I have said, if one aims at a definite and special result; but one can follow a different line that is more subtle, more comprehensive and complete. Naturally, there is a physical limit somewhere to your comprehensiveness; for on the physical plane you are confined in respect of time and space; and also it is true that great things are difficult to achieve unless there is a special concentration. But if you want to lead a higher and deeper life, you can command capacities which are much greater than those available to the methods of restriction and limitation belonging to the normal consciousness.

There is a considerable advantage in getting rid of one's limits, if not from the point of view of actual accomplishment, at least from the point of view of spiritual realisation.